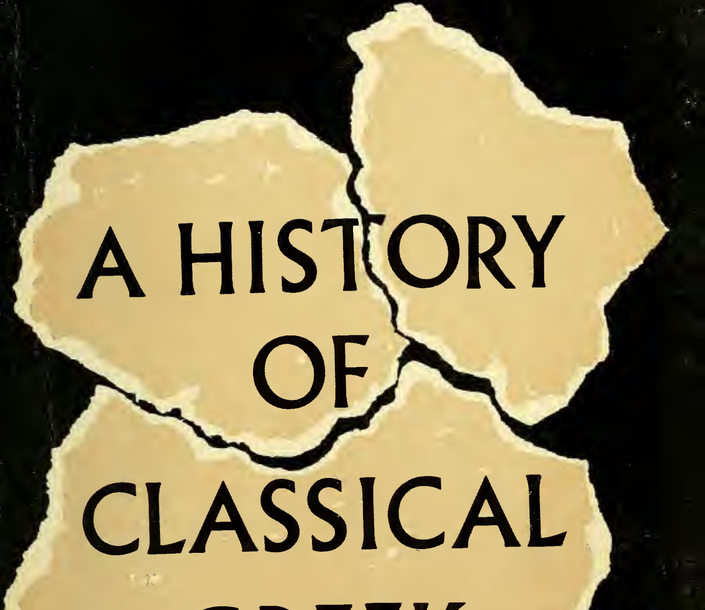
BS131V
$1.50



A HISTORY OF CLASSICAL GREEK LITERATURE

From Homer to Aristotle

T. A. Sinclair

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011

http://www.archive.org/details/historyofclassic00sinc

Stanley J. Kozlowski
March 22, 1969

T. A. Sinclair on the Greek drama:

"There is perhaps no field of activity in which Western civilization owes more to the Greeks than the theatre. Most of the terms which we use in this connection — tragedy, comedy, chorus, music, orchestra, theatre — are Greek words, a fact which serves to remind us of the debt. The danger, however, is not that we may forget what we owe, but that we may be misled by our familiarity with the terms into an erroneous conception of the real nature of Greek drama. We go to the theatre primarily to see and hear players *act;* the Greeks went to a religious service with music, dance and song. Even after the introduction of acting as we know it, tragedy at any rate did not lose its connection with religion and the choral element persisted. We have already observed that choral lyric poetry was intended to be performed; now our oldest extant tragedy, the *Supplices* of Aeschylus, consists largely of choral lyric; but even this early play shows a stage of development far removed from any known form of choral lyric and shows moreover that lyric was the chief but not the only stream which fed the river of Attic drama."

T. A. SINCLAIR

A HISTORY
GREEK

OF CLASSICAL LITERATURE

FROM HOMER TO ARISTOTLE

COLLIER BOOKS
NEW YORK, N. Y.

This Collier Books edition is published by arrangement with The Macmillan Company

Collier Books is a division of the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company

First Collier Books Edition 1962

First printed in 1934
All Rights Reserved
Hecho en los E.E.U.U.

Printed in the United States of America

Preface

THE AUTHOR WISHES to record with gratitude the constant help and encouragement which he has received from Professor F. A. Wright of Birkbeck College, who has been good enough to read almost the entire book. He is further indebted to Mr. M. P. Charlesworth and Professor J. A. K. Thomson who have read parts of it. Valuable criticisms and suggestions were made by all three. For errors and omissions the author is alone responsible, but he believes that he will have the indulgence and sympathy of any who have ever tried to write a book on a great subject within narrow limits of space and time.

For permission to make citations from certain translations from Greek authors best thanks are due to the following: Dr. J. W. Mackail (translation of the *Odyssey*, Clarendon Press); Professor Gilbert Murray (translations from Æschylus and Euripides); the Jowett Trustees and the Clarendon Press (Jowett's Thucydides); Professor A. E. Housman (translation from Æschylus on p. 220)[1]; Messrs Wm. Heinemann and the Loeb Library (E. C. Marchant, Xenophon's *Memorabilia;* W. H. S. Jones, Hippocrates; H. G. Evelyn-White, *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*); Messrs G. Bell and Sons (B. B. Rogers' Aristophanes); Messrs Basil Blackwell Ltd. (C. J. Billson's Pindar); Messrs Macmillan & Co. Ltd. (S. H. Butcher's *Poetics* of Aristotle); R. C. Trevelyan, Esq., and the University of Liverpool Press

---

[1] Prof. Housman wishes it to be noted that the words "whereon light never falls, etc." refer in the original to the land, not to the ships.

(translation of the *Oresteia*); Professor L. A. Post (translation of Plato's Epistles, Clarendon Press). If there are any omissions from this list the author hopes that the parties concerned will be good enough to accept this apology for the oversight.

We gratefully acknowledge permission to use authoritative translations of Greek passages (as notes in the Collier Books edition) from the following publishers:

Harvard University Press for notes 29, 36, 46, 48 and 49 in Part I; notes 16, 28, 34, 51, 54, 64, 79 and 81 in Part II from the Loeb Classical Library.

Clarendon Press, Oxford, for note 38 in Part II from *The Oxford Book of Greek Verse* and for note 70 in Part II from *Greek Lyric Poetry*.

Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd for note 50 in Part II from *Sappho*.

Contents

PART I

EPIC POETRY 11

Introductory. Pre-Homeric Literature. Homer. Background of the Homeric Poems. The *Iliad*. The *Odyssey*. Homeric Criticism and the Homeric Question. The Epic Cycle. The Comic Epics. Hesiod: *Works and Days*, *Theogony*. Hesiodea: *Shield*, etc. Homeric Hymns.

PART II

ELEGIAC, IAMBIC AND LYRIC (MELIC) POETRY 89

Definitions. Musical Instruments. Elegiac Poetry: Callinus, Tyrtæus, Mimnermus, Solon, Theognis. Iambic Poetry: Archilochus, Semonides, Hipponax. Lyric (Melic) Poetry: 1. Monodic: (*a*) Lesbos: Alcæus and Sappho; (*b*) Ionia and the Mainland: Anacreon, Corinna. 2. Choral: (*a*) Laconia and West Greece: Alcman, Stesichorus, Ibycus; (*b*) Ionia: Simonides; (*c*) Pindar and Bacchylides.

PART III

FROM MYTH TO HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY 151

Myth and History in Verse. The Beginnings of Prose. Myth and History in Prose. Hecatæus, Herodotus. Religion and Philosophy in Verse: Heraclitus, Xenophanes, Empedocles, etc. Philosophy in Prose. The Sophists: Protagoras, Antiphon (Sophist), Socrates, etc. Artistic Prose and Rhetoric: Gorgias, etc. Ionian Science: Hippocrates. The Scientific Study of History: Thucydides.

PART IV

DRAMA 209

Origins of Tragedy. Its Composite Nature. Early Tragedians: Thespis, Phrynichus. Production of Plays. Æschylus. Sophocles. Euripides. Origins of Comedy: the Sicilian Element: Epicharmus. Dorian Elements. Attic Elements. Lost Comedians: Cratinus, Crates, Eupolis, etc. Nature of Old Attic Comedy. Aristophanes: Three Periods of his Work. Fourth-Century Comedy.

PART V

THE FOURTH CENTURY 297

Changes in the Fourth Century. Historical works: Xenophon, Theopompus, Ephorus, the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia.* Educational Works and Hand-books: Xenophon, Æneas Tacticus. Xenophon's Philosophical and Socratic works. Other Socratic works. Plato, Sophron and the Dialogue Form. Plato's Life, Letters and Dialogues. The Attic Orators. Retrospect to the Fifth Century. The Marks of Artistic Prose and the Methods of Rhetoric. Antiphon the Orator (fifth century), Andocides, Lysias, Isæus, Isocrates, Demosthenes, Æschines, Lycurgus, Hypereides, etc. Aristotle and the End of the Classical Period.

SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY 379

INDEX 383

PART ONE

Epic Poetry

By Classical Greek Literature we mean all that precedes the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. What was written in verse or prose in that period by Hellenic people in the Hellenic language is the object of our study. The Hellenic people were not indigenous to Greece. Archæology has shown that their immigration must have begun early in the second millennium B.C. and that by 1500 B.C. the Greek or Hellenic element in the population must have been predominant. The immigration continued for some centuries, the different sections of the Hellenic race following one another, the Dorians being the last to arrive (*c.* 1100 B.C.). Further movements took place, chiefly in an easterly or southerly direction, until the islands of the Aegean and the coast of Asia Minor were peopled by Greeks. They all spoke one form or another of the language which we call Ancient Greek, a language belonging, like those of the Italic, Germanic, Keltic, Indo-Iranian and other groups, to the Indo-European family. They had imposed this language on the remnants which they absorbed of the pre-Greek inhabitants, but not without acquiring a good deal of non-Greek vocabulary. The various sections, Ionian, Æolian, Dorian, Arcadian, did not speak Greek in the same way. In Italy the political ascendancy of Rome and a policy of centralization soon caused the extinction of all Italic dialects except Latin, but in Greece there was no such central power and the four chief dialects with many subdivisions of them, though gradually diminishing, continued to be spoken throughout most of our period. But from long before the date of our earliest literature they all spoke the Hellenic tongue and they recognized the bond of language as one of the chief distinctions between themselves and the Barbarian.

Our knowledge of Classical Greek Literature is at best partial. Only a fraction of the great works even of the fifth and fourth centuries have come down to us and these are all confined to less than two dozen writers. Of the rest some have perished altogether; some are known to us only by fragments varying in length from a brief quotation to long but often mutilated pieces of papyrus. Only works which were in regular demand, books read in schools for example, were constantly recopied and handed down. Alexandrian critics established canons of excellence in literature, and the work of those who did not find a place in their lists stood little chance of survival. If all that Alexandria approved had come down to us we should not fare so badly, but accidents of time and chance destroyed much more, and some Greek authors well known to Cæsar and Cicero are now mere names to us. Doubtless much that was lost was not of the first water. For if the remains of Greek Literature are lamentably small, at least they are singularly free from rubbish, which cannot be said of the literature of any subsequent period in any country. But our loss is immense; in drama alone out of some hundreds of tragedies performed in Athens in the fifth century B.C. we have only thirty-two and these are all the work of only three writers. If this is the state of our knowledge of the literature of historical times, how little can we hope to know of the beginnings of Greek Literature, of all that preceded the work of Homer.

Pre-Homeric Literature

There can, however, be no doubt that such literature existed. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are perfect and finished productions, unfaltering in metre and in diction, poems which no genius however great could have composed if he had not had behind him a long tradition of literary development. The Greeks[1] themselves knew that there was literature before Homer but they tell us little, and much of it bears the stamp of later invention. They speak of two pre-Homeric poets,[2] Orpheus and Musæus. Orpheus sometimes appears as teacher of Musæus, sometimes as pupil. We possess no writings which can be ascribed to either and it seems evident that the whole is a creation of the Orphics, a religious group whose ideas had a vogue in Greece about the sixth century B.C. and who wished to claim for their myth and doctrine a greater antiquity than Homer.[3] Religious enthusiasm is responsible also for another legend which ascribed the discovery of choral lyric poetry to a certain Philammon,[4] son of Apollo. But his name "lover of Ammon" shows that if he ever existed it was after the time when the Greeks became acquainted with the worship of Zeus Ammon in Egypt, that is after the founding of Cyrene in 623 B.C. Yet though Philammon may be an invention we have good reason for accepting the tradition that lyric poetry existed long before Homer. The evidence is afforded by Homer himself. A Pæan of thanksgiving to Apollo is sung in *Iliad*, i. 473 and xxii. 391, a *θρῆνος* or lament in *Iliad*, xxiv. 720 ff. and *Odyssey*, xxiv. 60 ff., a marriage song in *Iliad*, xviii. 493. These are all choral lyrics but solo or monodic lyric existed too, *Iliad*, i. 603, ix. 186 and in the *Odyssey*. Hence lyric poetry was known and so well established that it could be casually alluded to in Homer's time and probably long before. Now all Greek verse was originally accompanied by music and, apart from these allusions to lyric verse, there are in the *Iliad* and still more in the *Odyssey* references to the singing of *narrative* verse. In the *Iliad* (ix. 189) we find Achilles sitting outside his tent singing *κλέα ἀνδρῶν*, famous deeds of men. In the *Odyssey* Demodocus sings of the Wooden Horse (viii. 499 ff.), of how Odysseus quarrelled with Achilles (*ib.*, 73 ff.). Another minstrel, Phemius (i. 325–327), sings to Penelope of the return of the Greeks from Troy. They sang of such things because they were of almost topical interest. They might also sing deeds of gods as Demodocus does in *Odyssey*, viii. 266 ff. This is a particularly valuable example because here we have Demodocus' song of Ares and Aphrodite in full, in hexameter verse and forming part of the *Odyssey*. It is not pretended either that the lay was simply taken over by Homer from some other poet or that he invented it entirely himself. The significant thing is that Homer is here showing us a piece of narrative hexameter verse being sung in heroic times. If Demodocus lived and sang this lay some three hundred years before Homer's time we may be sure that he did not sing it as it now stands. What we now have is the work of Homer written in fully developed hexameters unsuitable for singing. To find out what form of metre Demodocus would have used is well-nigh impossible. But because he used a lyre and because the lyrical metres that we know are not usually hexameters or divided into lines at all, we are not entitled to assume that early narrative poetry used any of our so-called lyric metres. The dactylic rhythm and the division into lines are well suited to narrative verse and are not in themselves unsuited to singing.[5] There may well have been a more primitive hexameter more rigidly dactylic and sung to the lyre, out of which the literary hexameter developed.[6] At all events the existence for generations before Homer of sung narrative verse is well attested. To give a detailed account of its history is clearly impossible, but a few facts emerge. The earliest exponent of the art was the amateur minstrel like Achilles who, like other well-born persons, sang to amuse or console himself or others. Then came the professional ἀοιδός who in heroic times was attached to the court of a king or chieftain, but afterwards sang also for the people. Such court bards are a well-known feature of the history of Epic Poetry in other countries. The minstrel sang of gods or of men, at first living men but, when mighty deeds ceased to be done, of dead heroes. He sang to the accompaniment of a lyre (κίθαρις, φόρμιγξ) which he played himself. The earliest minstrels did not have before them set *poems* but only themes grouped around famous events such as the Siege of Troy or the Siege of Thebes. On these themes they composed. They had so mastered their art that where memory failed or inclination prompted they could improvise. Many different minstrels must have treated the same theme, and it is a fair supposition that with the decay of the heroic age came a decay in the quality of the minstrels, so that stock versions of the various themes became the common property of the profession. This is the earliest stage at which it can be said that we are passing from the art of minstrelsy to the art of literature. The earliest literary form in Greek hexameter verse is the lay, not the epic. The next stage shows a further decline in the importance of the ἀοιδός. The musical accompaniment was abandoned. It had been an important aid to the minstrel but was much less necessary now that there was no improvisation. Instead of singing (ἀείδειν)[7] they recited (καταλέγειν). The only survival of the accompaniment was a wand or staff (ῥάβδος) with which they marked the beat. Inevitably the metre must have undergone some changes at the same time. The rhythm remained dactylic but greater licence in the use of spondees could be allowed. The change from singing to recitation must have at least begun before Homer's time.[8] He uses the term καταλέγειν of Demodocus (*Odyssey*, viii. 496, etc.). This is admittedly an anachronism in speaking of the Heroic Age but shows that in Homer's own time recitation was known. At all events these lays must have been current in large numbers, constantly recited and constantly changing, carried to this place or that as individual minstrels or whole peoples migrated. They no longer told tales of mighty living men, for there were none, but of the mighty dead and of the gods. The tales they told were mostly well known to their hearers.

---

[1] Aristotle, *Poetics*, iv. 8.

[2] Aristoph., *Frogs*, 1032; Plato, *Apol.*, 41*a*.

---

[3] See below, p. 170.

[4] Pseudo-Hesiod, Fr. 111, Rzach. There are other names, Eumolpus, Olen, Chrysothemis, of half-legendary lyric poets.

---

[5] At least one can well imagine, as an accompaniment, a kind of "strumming" on the lyre in the same rhythm.

[6] Even if this supposition is correct, the ultimate origin of the hexameter verse is still to seek. Its origin has been looked for in existing lyric metres but without positive results. The line has a marked tendency to a pause after the fourth foot and the earliest narrative verse may have had a four-foot line. For discussion see Bowra, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad*, ch. iii.

All this and much else must have existed before Homer conceived the idea of writing a poem in the same metre and style, full of the same repetitions, similes and battle scenes as the old lays, but differing from them in being planned on a more grandiose scale with careful plot construction and delineation of character — a true Epic. Perhaps there were epics before Homer. He can hardly have been the only poet to use this epic material to make something more than a lay. But we cannot draw hard and fast lines. The standards by which, since Aristotle, we judge an Epic, Matthew Arnold's famous notes, "nobility, rapidity, plainness of thought and diction" are all simply taken from the *Iliad*. It is idle to speculate whether an anonymous Thessalian *Argonautica* was a work of the same stamp. It is just because the penultimate stages of the development of epic are quite as obscure as the earlier that Homer presents so many problems. Indeed we seem obliged to break off our account of pre-Homeric literature[9] just where we need it most. It is almost as if we knew a little, a very little, about Medieval Miracle Plays, nothing at all about the pre-Elizabethan dramatists, and were confronted with Shakespeare entire.

---

[7] The term of course continued to be used, just as we speak of poets singing.

[8] The change must have been gradual. The lyre would continue to be used even when it ceased to be necessary. Between singing and reciting there must have been an intoning stage; it is possible that Homer belongs to this stage (Bowra, *op. cit.*, p. 59). Hesiod (*Theog.*, 30) used the wand and by Pindar's time (*Isthm.*, iii.–iv. 61–65) it was the regular practice.

Homer

The period covered by this problematical account of pre-Homeric literature is a long one, perhaps some hundreds of years. If Achilles was an historical figure and lived at the traditional date of the Trojan War, his *κλέα ἀνδρῶν*, "famous deeds of men," go back to about 1200 B.C. Between that time and the beginning of the historical period the chief known events were the Coming of the Dorians, about the close of the eleventh century B.C., and the long-continued early migrations of Ionic and Æolic Greeks from Thessaly and the Mainland to Asia Minor. These migrants brought their minstrels and their lays with them. Their early history in their new land is little known. Archæology has told us more of Mycenæan times than of the Hellenes in Ionia. But their civilization took firm root, mingling with those of non-Greek peoples,

---

[9] But see below, pp. 31 and 35.

Carian and Phrygian. The Ionic element seemed to predominate over the Æolic, not politically but culturally. The autonomous city-state was their form of polity. Here began the Awakening, the Greek Renaissance, first literary, then scientific. In this Renaissance the outstanding figure is Homer, author of the *Iliad* and in all probability of the *Odyssey* too. For many years his existence was denied by some. Nowadays it is usually allowed that there was a Homer who lived in Asia Minor. Everything else is a matter of dispute. According to tradition he was author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* but about his life and time traditions vary. We have a number of so-called *Lives of Homer*, mostly late compilations largely deduced from Homer's own poems. There is nothing individual about them and no personality of Homer emerges any more than from his own works. He is just a type, the old blind poet. Blind men often became bards or rhapsodes (reciters [10]) just as the lame became handworkers. On the subject of Homer's birthplace it is tempting to disregard all the *Lives* and to agree with Antipater, the epigrammatist who, after mentioning Colophon, Smyrna, Salamis, Chios and other places that claimed Homer as their own, concludes: "The wide heaven is thy fatherland and thy mother no mortal woman but the Muse Calliope." Still, among much that is sheer romancing we may accept as fairly certain that Homer lived on the eastern side of the Aegean. A better claim can be made out for Smyrna and Chios than for any other Asiatic city. The tradition associating him with Smyrna is fairly persistent. According to the least incredible *Life*, the *Vita Herodotea*,[11] Homer lived partly at Smyrna and partly at Cyme in Æolis. He was not born blind but became so during a visit to Colophon. Little else in the *Life* is worthy of even provisional acceptance. That he visited Ithaca and that a minstrel named Phemius was his first guardian and teacher look like mere inferences from the *Odyssey*. In favour of Chios it is urged that there was there a guild of *Homeridæ*, "sons of Homer." But this only means a kind of Homer Society, a guild of rhapsodes who recited his poems. More important is line 172 of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* where the author speaks of himself as being "a blind man dwelling in rugged Chios." This would be conclusive if the author of the *Hymn* were also the author of the *Iliad*. It therefore remains at best a probable surmise that he lived at Smyrna or Chios or both between 900 and 800 B.C.

---

[10] *ῥαψῳδός* probably formed from *ῥάβδος* and *ᾄδειν* like *κιθαρῳδός*, *αὐλῳδός*. See above note 8. But it may be connected with *ῥάπτειν* to stitch; *ῥάπτειν ἀοιδήν* in Hes. Fr. 227 is simply to make poetry.

[11] Its author was not Herodotus but he has contrived to imitate successfully the Ionic dialect of the historian. It was probably based on a much older work, a *βίος Ὁμήρου* originally in verse. See W. Schmid, *Griechische Literaturgeschichte*, I. i. p. 85.

The Background of the Homeric Poems

The Greeks regarded Homer no less as an historian than a poet,[12] and the historical and social background, especially of the *Iliad*, has an important bearing on the literary aspects of the poems. The world which Homer describes did not actually exist in all its details at any one time. Socially it presents a composite picture with elements belonging to different epochs. Historically it embodies much fact and much fiction. These discrepancies have given rise to trouble (see below on The Homeric Question), but if the outline of pre-Homeric literature given above be even approximately correct, most of the discrepancies will explain themselves, while the combination of fact and fiction is readily understandable and is a feature which the Homeric poems share with the early Epics of other countries.

The outstanding features of the world of the *Iliad* are the Siege of Troy and the overlordship of Agamemnon. The period in Greek history is that which is known as the Heroic Age. This is stated by Hesiod[13] (eighth century B.C.). Greek tradition regarded the Coming of the Dorians[14] as marking the end of the age of Heroes. Homer does not notice any Dorians in Greece.[15] Exactness of date is impossible but the invasion probably took place between 1100 and 1000 B.C. For the Siege of Troy the traditional dates vary between 1250 and 1184 B.C. About 1200, that is in late Mycenæan times, is usually accepted as according with the best ancient tradition. We cannot say positively that this is the time when Agamemnon was king but we know of nothing to contradict it and no reason for supposing that Agamemnon did not exist. That Troy existed is certain. The excavations begun by Schliemann at Hissarlik in the Troad have shown that there were nine cities on the site. Of these the sixth is generally[16] agreed to answer best to the description in the *Iliad*. Excavations have shown that the city was destroyed but cannot with sufficient accuracy tell us the date of the destruction, still less whether it was carried out by Agamemnon and the Achæans. But at least it is not improbable that Homer is preserving a genuine historical tradition and that Hesiod was correct in putting a siege of Troy in the Age of Heroes. This is not to say that Homer's account of it is all historically true; a poet has many liberties denied to an historian. For example, the rape of Helen, if not a myth,[17] can hardly have been the sole cause of such a war. Hence it has been suggested that commercial expansion was at the root of the war or that it was part of the first colonizing migrations. But it must have been earlier than either of these, if it took place in the Heroic Age. From what we know of that age it is more likely that they fought for plunder. In Homer, apart from the recovery of Helen in which most of the Achæan chiefs can have had no real interest, rich booty is the chief motive for fighting.[18] An interesting suggestion is that the clash between Greece and Troy may be part of the friction between the Achæans and the Hittite empire which came to an end about the same time as Troy was supposed to have fallen.

---

[12] See especially Thucydides, Bk. i.

[13] *Works and Days*, 159–165.

[14] Mythically represented as the Return of the Children of Heracles.

[15] But Dorians in Crete (*Odyssey*, xix. 175–177) present a difficulty.

---

[16] But not universally. Schliemann himself thought it was the second city, which would put the Trojan War back to about 2000 B.C.

[17] Helen seems to belong to myth rather than history. In other versions of her story, *e.g.* Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis* and *Helen*, she was never at Troy.

[18] See especially *Iliad*, Bk. i.

Again it may be questioned how far the overlordship of Agamemnon is historically true and at what time. In the *Iliad* Agamemnon appears as overlord of all the Achæans. Each country has its own king, each bearing his own sceptre, Menelaus of Sparta, Nestor of Pylos, Achilles of the Myrmidons and so forth. But Agamemnon of Argos possessed some kind of "divine right of kings," the symbol of which was a special wand or sceptre handed down to him by his ancestors who had received it from Zeus; it carried with it the right to "rule over many islands and all Argos." [19] It is disputed whether this can mean all the Argives, that is all the Greeks, or whether it only refers to Agamemnon's own kingdom of Argos in the Peloponnese with an island dominion. The use of Argives = Achæans = Greeks is in favour of the former interpretation, and in any case it is clear that Agamemnon occupies a unique position in virtue of which he commands the Achæan army. However high-handed Agamemnon may have been, Achilles' revolt is at least an unprecedented violation of heroic conventions, and when Nestor reproves him he reminds him that the king to whom Zeus has given authority, that is Agamemnon, has always had greater honour than the rest.[20] There was, however, no very strict military organization. A battle in Homer is like a painting by David. The leaders alone appear and they lead their men into action as and when they like. The Greeks did not closely besiege Troy. For months, perhaps years,[21] they conducted raids and to the very end their ships remained the starting-point of their operations. There is good evidence outside Homer for the existence in the Heroic Age of Achæans who lived by making raids by sea. Egyptian sources speak of Peoples of the Sea and some at least of the names in Egyptian have been identified with names of Greek peoples. In the thirteenth century B.C. the Akaiwasha (Achæans) invaded Egypt. About 1194 Rameses III defeated raiders from the sea, and this defeat would seem to mark a decline in their activity outside the Aegean Sea. Hittite records also show a knowledge of Greek peoples and some have even identified the names of Greek heroes, *e.g.* Attarissiyas = Atreus. The name of the Achæans also occurs. That Agamemnon (Atreus' grandson) does not occur is not surprising; the Fall of Troy occurred when the Hittite empire had already fallen into decay. Hence there is no mention in Homer of the Hittites,[22] who if they were allies of Troy, as was suggested above, were too weak and distant to participate.

---

[19] *Il.*, ii. 108.

[20] *Il.*, i. 277–279.

[21] No credence is to be attached to the *nine* years of warfare preceding the *Iliad*. Nine is merely a favourite number.

While much of this is only surmise, still there is nothing to prevent us from believing that Agamemnon and other heroes actually existed and that the Siege of Troy took place. Further to inquire into the historicity of the *Iliad* would be out of place here, but it is important for literary criticism to observe those discrepancies, which show us that the state of society which Homer describes is not one which ever existed in all its details but presents elements separated by many hundreds of years. The excavations at Troy and Mycenæ disclosed objects or representations of objects many of which agreed remarkably with those mentioned in Homer. A helmet with boar's tusks was discovered and Homer's mention of such a helmet was shown not to be due to his own fancy. A cup like Nestor's was found at Mycenæ. This and similar evidence raises literary no less than historical questions. Did Homer see and handle the objects which he so accurately describes? If not, how did he know about them? If we answer the first question in the affirmative, thereby making Homer contemporaneous with the objects he describes, we are placing him as early as the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries B.C. Now it is clear from other and later things mentioned in Homer that the *Iliad* cannot have been composed as early as that. In *Iliad*, vi. 289–290 Paris is said to have brought clothes for Helen from Sidon, Phœnicians are frequently mentioned in the *Odyssey*, the art of the Shield of Achilles (*Iliad*, xviii.) is not Mycenæan but far later. To put such things in the hands of the heroes who fought at Troy is anachronistic. So is the burning of the slaughtered captives at Patroclus' tomb. Bodies were buried in Mycenæan times and objects buried along with them. On the other hand Homer is archaizing in not mentioning the Dorians and calling weapons bronze[23] and generally in describing many of the features of a society which must have preceded his own by centuries. Therefore arises the other question: How was Homer able to do this? How could he tell us not merely how Troy was besieged but how people lived, how they yoked their chariots and launched their ships, what their helmets, shields, and drinking-cups were like? In the present state of our knowledge the best explanation seems to be that these descriptions, like everything else relating to Mycenæan and heroic times, owe their presence to the same literary tradition that made Epic Poetry possible. They are part of the traditional matter handed down for generations.

---

[22] Unless Κήτειοι, mentioned in *Odyssey*, xi. 521 as allies of Troy, means Hittites.

The Scheme of the "Iliad"

The starting-point of the *Iliad* is the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. The whole course of the last year of the war depends on it and without it there would have been no story, no epic poem, only a record of fighting. But Troy is the centre of the poem, which is therefore rightly named the *Iliad.* It is not an Achilleid, for Achilles is not the hero of the *Iliad* in the same way as Odysseus is the hero of the *Odyssey.* Odysseus is the chief actor in nearly everything that takes place in the *Odyssey*, but Achilles is absent for more than half the *Iliad.* Yet he is the key to the situation; even when taking no part he is of supreme importance; his absence seems to render the whole force powerless. The cause of that absence is therefore rightly placed at the beginning of the poem, for the whole action springs from the quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles. It arose thus. Agamemnon had taken captive a girl Chryseis, daughter of Chryses a priest of Apollo. He refuses the father's request that she should be restored for a ransom and sends him away with threats. Chryses appeals to Apollo who sends a plague upon the army of the Achæans. Greatly alarmed, and knowing that something must have displeased Apollo, the sender of plagues, the people meet together at Achilles' suggestion on the tenth day of the Plague. The seer Calchas informs them that no sacrifices of oxen can appease Apollo, only the return of Chryseis to her father. Agamemnon leaps up, his eyes flashing with anger, glares at Calchas, and says: "Seer of evil, never yet hast thou prophesied anything good." He has come to prefer the girl Chryseis to his wife Clytæmnestra, but for his people's sake he will restore her if they will find another "prize" to take her place. Then Achilles, knowing that such prizes were rare and suspecting no doubt that Agamemnon wanted his Briseis, suggests that the king might wait till Troy was taken, when there would be plenty of women. Agamemnon sees through this. "You cannot deceive me or persuade me," he says; "I know you wish to keep your own prize and see me go without. . . . But if they will not give me a girl I will take one myself, yours or Ajax's or Odysseus'." Achilles, hasty and self-willed, flares up. "I had no reason," he says, "to come and fight the Trojans, who never did me or my country any harm. I only came to help you and Menelaus, and this is the reward I get. It is always the same; you always claim more than your share." And so he refuses to fight any more. Agamemnon quietly tells him he can go if he wishes and that he will take Briseis in place of Chryseis. The son of Peleus did not expect this. Stung with grief and fury he would have murdered Agamemnon but for the intervention of Athene who, invisible save to him, plucked him by the hair, spoke to him and persuaded him to sheathe his sword. But his anger was unappeased and he pours forth his last torrent of abuse against the *δημοβόρος βασιλεὺς*:

---

[23] This is really an accident of language, not archaizing, like our use of "fee" (ox) applied to coined money. χαλκός persisted in sense of weapon and χαλκεύς was a blacksmith in any metal.

> Thou sodden with wine, having the eyes of a dog and the heart of a deer, never hast thou taken courage

> to arm for war together with thy folk or to lie in ambush with the princes of the Achæans; to thy mind that is but death. Far better, is it not, to seize for thyself the meed of honour of every man who through the wide host of the Achæans speaketh contrary to thee. Folk-devouring king! for those whom thou rulest are naught; else were this, son of Atreus, thy last deed of violence. But I will tell thee this, and swear a mighty oath upon it . . . verily one day shall longing for Achilles come upon the Achæans, every man of them. In that day when many fall dying at the hand of murderous Hector, then shalt thou for all thy care be able to bring no aid. Thou shalt be tearing the heart within thee, angry that thou didst pay no heed to the best of the Achæans.[24]

At this point the aged Nestor king of Pylos intervenes and tries unsuccessfully to make peace between them for the sake of the allies. As he is never tired of reminding them, he remembers the men of old who were far mightier than those of to-day. They were always ready to listen to his advice. Let Agamemnon do so too. The king answers him with respect but insists that he must be obeyed; there cannot be two commanders and Achilles is above himself. Achilles meanwhile has been pondering. He is less furiously angry but his mind is made up. He will not fight or take any more orders from Agamemnon. He has no choice but to let Briseis go; he will not endanger the allies by resisting by force. The assembly is dissolved. Achilles returns with his friend Patroclus son of Menœtius to his camp while the crafty Odysseus, who had wisely held his tongue, secures the task of taking Chryseis back to her father. The task of going boldly into the Myrmidons' lines and demanding Briseis of their king Achilles is entrusted to two of Agamemnon's *κήρυκες*, personal staff, who came up to him in fear and trembling. They cannot speak. But Achilles greets them kindly. They are only doing their duty and he does not hold them to blame. He seems now to be no longer angry but stricken with grief. He does not go in to see Briseis but asks Patroclus to hand her over to the heralds. He does not look at her but sits alone weeping and gazing at the sea and calling upon his mother Thetis the Nereid. Thetis rose from the sea, came and sat beside him and stroked him. He tells her his troubles and, throwing all loyalty aside, actually begs her, as she is a goddess, to ask Zeus to help the Trojans to drive back the Greeks and so teach Agamemnon a lesson. Thetis promises that she will do this as soon as Zeus and the other gods return from a visit to the "blameless Ethiopians."

---

[24] From i. 224–244.

Thus ends the first day. The poem is already in full swing. The unfortunate quarrel has revealed to us something of the characters of the two men, between whose two wills there is to be a long-drawn-out contest. There has been no formal introduction or description of Agamemnon or Achilles. The son of Atreus, king of men, and swift-footed Achilles, son of Peleus, need no introduction; nor does Odysseus nor most of the heroes of Epic. Some account is given of Nestor; perhaps he is largely a creation of Homer, a genial, human, garrulous old man of whom earlier tales had little to say. Nor is any synopsis given of the previous history of the war. Everyone knows that Paris (Alexander) had with Aphrodite's help carried off Helen, wife of Menelaus of Sparta and that the Achæans are fighting to recover her. Nor was the rest of the story, the wrath of Achilles, the death of Hector and the Fall of Troy, unknown to his audience. To tax Homer with lack of invention would be as preposterous as to accuse Thomas Hardy because he did not create the Napoleonic Wars. As with human characters so with divine. The gods in Homer play an important part[25] and their function must not be misunderstood. Homer found them already in possession of certain attributes and associations, certain traditions about themselves and their part in tales of heroes. He has made them characters in the story. Though divine and capable of things beyond the power of men they have all the feelings of human beings in whose affairs they intervene, suggesting and inspiring, helping their favourites against their foes. A god or a goddess is the instigator of nearly every important decision. Aphrodite is of course on the side of the Trojans. Paris is her especial favourite and Helen is completely subject to her or, as we should say, cannot help herself when love takes her. Hera, wife of Zeus, and Athene are equally vigorous in the cause of the Greeks. Zeus is "father of gods and men." His will is supreme, subject only to a mysterious power known as Fate. He is in a difficult position and his favour is sought by both sides. Of cults, shrines and the like there is little or nothing in Homer. There are prayer, strict attendance to religious ceremonial on all solemn occasions, and sacrifices to secure a god's favour. But of religion in any other sense, religion involving moral obligation, there is none. The moral standards of the gods are no better than those of human beings; they often seem worse. Their sense of humour is crude. They use their supernatural powers exactly as they please and often arouse the indignation of men, who however never question their rights. But although they are virtually characters in the story, they are a race apart, dwelling far away on Olympus, living on nectar and ambrosia and having a strange divine blood (*ἰχώρ*) in their veins. They are majestic beings holding sway over all human affairs and receiving as their right the homage and offerings of men. Such an anomaly would be impossible in a strict theologian. But Homer was a poet, not a theologian. He is not to be blamed if Herodotus[26] calls him one and if the *Iliad* was used as a religious text-book. The anomaly did not exist for Homer or for his audience. Like the characters in the action the audience accepted without demur the divinity of the gods and their right to human worship together with complete liberty to act as they pleased. Homer cannot have innovated all this; such an innovation would not have found approval. When Herodotus says that Homer and Hesiod made a theogony for the Greeks and gave the gods their names, he is greatly exaggerating the part played by Homer. Herodotus knew probably as little as we do of pre-Homeric poetry, and in his day the *Iliad* was already in use as a source-book of information about the gods. On the other hand he is right to this extent that Homer did bring gods and men into a close relationship and one which continued to be a literary convention even after it ceased to be a religious reality.[27] But in Homer's time and for the aristocratic Ionian audiences for whom Homer wrote it was a religious reality. Take away the gods from the *Iliad* and what is left? A still magnificent and tragic story. But we would miss at least two important elements, the subjection of man to forces beyond his control and the contrast between the life of the gods and that of men. Rightly understood the gods should not be a hindrance but a help to our appreciation of Homer. Their sudden inspirations, their interventions in battle are not unfair; they are the kind of unforeseen thing that does happen and against which the human race is powerless. Without the gods Homer's picture of human life would be imperfect; with them it is complete. Again, the gods themselves in their own sphere provide a pleasing variety, a contrast between their care-free existence and the hard lot of men. The gods may have their disputes and troubles but they are trifling and frivolous compared with men's, and Homer's treatment of them is sometimes frankly comic. But the laughter of Homer's audience at the antics of the gods was not jeering at an outworn creed but good-humoured amusement. Homer uses the world of the gods to afford a relief from and a contrast to the tragedy of the human world.

---

[25] Especially Apollo, Athene, Poseidon, Hera, as well as Zeus. Some others such as Artemis have little to do.

---

[26] ii. 53.

It is to this world of Olympus that Homer first takes us at i. 493. After twelve days' absence they return from feasting with the Ethiopians. The gods are human enough to enjoy a holiday, but during their absence we have just seen Apollo sending a plague and Athene appearing to Achilles. If we wished to be logical we might assume that these two stayed behind; but it would be quite unnecessary. We have here another of the anomalies inseparable from any anthropomorphic religion. The first scene on Olympus is characteristic. Zeus is ruler of gods and men but he is constantly bothered by his prying and nagging wife Hera. In the high tragedy of the heroes wives may be unfaithful but the nagging wife is a comic figure and we find her among the gods. Now lovely Thetis, remembering her promise to Achilles, comes up from the sea and sitting before Zeus clasps his knees with her left arm and with her right touches his beard and begs him to humour her son by giving victory to the Trojans. At first Zeus will not answer. She appeals again; she knows she is not one of the great goddesses and that he has nothing to fear in refusing *her*. This pathetic appeal moves him, but he is afraid of his wife:

---

[27] It cannot be pretended that Homer is accurately describing the religion of the time of the Fall of Troy though much may be true. In any case the paucity of references to cults and to worship at particular places points to a time after the migrations when shrines would have been abandoned or exist only in the king's palace not as separate buildings; only echoes of the mainland, such as Dodona, remain.

> Already she is constantly upbraiding me among the immortal gods and saying that I help the Trojans in battle. Depart now again lest Hera notice anything, and I will take care of this matter to fulfil it.

But jealous Hera had already noticed Thetis and at once attacks Zeus:

> Who now among the gods has been taking counsel with you, deceitful in mind? Always you take delight in keeping me away and making decisions in secret; never yet have you of your own free will brought yourself to tell me what you intend.

Zeus tells her not to ask questions; but Hera had no need of an answer to that question. She knew it was Thetis and had no difficulty in guessing what she had been asking for. But Zeus will say nothing; what he has decided he will do, that is all. It soon went round Olympus that Zeus and Hera had been quarrelling again. Hephæstus tries to console his mother Hera. He knows what Zeus is likely to do if he loses his temper: "Once before this when I would protect you, he seized me by the foot and hurled me from the door of heaven." The gods finish their banquet and retire each to his own house.

But Zeus could not sleep. He was thinking how he could do honour to Thetis and Achilles and incidentally spite Hera by securing a victory for the Trojans. To do this the Achæans must be induced to fight at once, filled with false hope. So he sends Oneiros, that is, a dream, to the sleeping Agamemnon. The dream appears in the likeness of Nestor and says:

> I am the messenger of Zeus . . . he has commanded you to arm the long-haired Achæans with all speed for now you will take the wide-wayed city of the Trojans.

He adds a lie, to allay any incredulity, that the gods are now united in favour of the Achæans. Agamemnon awakes full of optimism; he tells his dream to the chiefs assembled by Nestor's ship. Nestor says that if anyone else had told the dream he would not have believed it, but he believes Agamemnon and the sceptre-bearing princes disperse to gather their men to the place of assembly (*ἀγορή*). Agamemnon stood up bearing his sceptre, a divine sceptre that came from Zeus, symbol of his authority over the other kings, by which he ruled over "many islands and all Argos." Then he does a risky thing. Instead of telling the people his dream, he tells them exactly the opposite, that Zeus, though he had promised them Troy, had broken his word and there was now nothing for it but to return home. If this was intended as a test of the temper of the troops, if he hoped that they would protest against being deprived of the chance to sack Troy, he was greatly disappointed. The elated soldiers rushed down to the ships cheering and began to make them ready for returning home. The situation is saved by Odysseus, prompted by Athene, for she and Hera had seen what was happening. Odysseus was full of despair but suddenly he changed his mind and pulled himself together — that is our less picturesque way of saying that a goddess visited him. Tossing his coat to his "herald" he went straight to Agamemnon, seized the famous sceptre and went up and down the lines *κοιρανέων* "being king." Holding the sceptre he has its authority and with characteristic cunning while actually usurping Agamemnon's power he cries *οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη· εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω.* He succeeds in bringing everyone back from the ships to the assembly. But there were loud protests from Thersites, the ugly and garrulous hump-back, the butt of the army, who reviled Agamemnon and wishes to return home without further discussion and let Agamemnon stay if he wishes. Odysseus answers him with words and blows from the sceptre, and leaves him bruised and bleeding. The others were sorry for him but they could not help laughing at him and agreed that it was the best day's work Odysseus had ever done. This somewhat savage kind of humour may distress us but physical deformity has always been an object of derision and the gods were constantly laughing at lame Hephæstus. Odysseus speaks, he cannot blame the men for wanting to return but Troy may still be taken, as was foretold before they started from Aulis. The speech is greeted with cheers. Nestor outlines a scheme of reorganization. Agamemnon speaks and, though he emphasizes the hard fighting that is before them, he also is cheered. Sacrifice and prayer are offered to Zeus who "accepted their sacrifices but made their troubles to increase woefully!" A change of heart has come over the Achæans; again it is the influence of Athene; and Agamemnon marshals his host.

The marshalling of the host is described in the form of a geographically arranged survey of the nations who took part in the war on the Achæan side. It is followed by a list of the Trojan allies. The poet appeals to the Muses; without their help he cannot recount so much detail; they know these things, he has only heard them. Then follows what is known as the *Catalogue of Ships* (Bk. ii. 494–877) the genuineness of which has been much disputed and which is missing from some of our manuscripts. A list of cities with their leaders and the number of ships they sent has little literary value; this is sufficient to account for its occasional omission in copies of the *Iliad.* It does not mean that it is spurious.

Homer had as good reason for including a list of combatants in the Trojan War as Thucydides had for the Peloponnesian. The *Catalogue* has a historical value. Moreover, it must have had a strong appeal for the audience. Few of us to-day share this liking but the *Catalogue* has the same kind of attraction as a Bidding Prayer, Old Testament genealogies or even an old Army List. On the other hand parts of it may be spurious. It lends itself to interpolation[28] and Zenodotus and other Alexandrian critics athetized many passages; but there seems to be no sufficient reason for ousting it bodily from the *Iliad*. It is certainly not a late invention; it is extremely old, for its geography on both sides of the Aegean is not that of Homer's day but of the time before the Dorian invasion and therefore generally correct for the age of Troy. It was originally one of the old lays, with its own invocation to the Muses; doubtless there were others of this type. Homer knew this one and made use of it; it did not require much adaptation; a description of pre-Dorian Greece was almost a catalogue of the allies already, but it required perhaps a little more than Homer gave it. It really describes the assembly of the ships at Aulis rather than a review at Troy. Many of the people and places in the *Catalogue* are not necessary for the story of the *Iliad*. They might have been omitted and more emphasis laid on the important ones. This would have suited better the artistic purpose of the poem, but it would not have suited the audience. The *Catalogue* was doubtless known already; omissions would have been resented, especially by those who perhaps claimed descent from figures in the list. For this or for some other reason Homer did not tamper much with the traditional list. The result is that the *Catalogue* stands out a little awkwardly and we see a piece of Homer's material not completely submerged in the pattern.

---

[28] For example, if Strabo is to be trusted, line 558, which contains a reference to the Athenians, was interpolated by Solon or Pisistratus. The Megarians had a different version which introduced Nisæa. The story may be quite untrue but alteration was easy and variants existed. Cp. Quintilian, v, II, 40.

It is pleasant to turn to the third book where Homer is seen in happiest mood. Hector roundly abuses Alexander for not doing his share of the fighting but dallying with Helen. Paris replies: "Cast not up at me the lovely gifts of golden Aphrodite; the glorious gifts of the gods cannot be refused." But he agrees to fight in single combat with Menelaus for Helen as a prize, and Hector goes to arrange a truce. Menelaus agrees to fight but insists that the truce must be made and the oaths taken by Priam himself; Hector he will not trust. In this way Homer introduces not merely the oath-taking ceremony but the famous scene in which the messengers sent to bring Priam find him on the battlements with Helen watching the Argive host and questioning her about them. It is claimed that this beautiful passage (iii. 146–242), the Τειχοσκοπία, Watching on the Walls, is out of place in the tenth year of the war, by which time Priam could hardly fail to have seen Agamemnon, Ajax (Aias) and Odysseus among the Argives, and that Helen would have known that her brothers, Castor and Polydeuces were dead. But Helen was feeling homesick (139 ff.) and Priam saw that it would do her good to talk about her own folk. This softens the illogicality, which in any case is slight. The dual necessity of adhering to tradition and doing his own work as a poet could not fail to land Homer in little inconsistencies. The ceremony of taking the oaths is recounted in detail — a good example of Homer's and his hearers' liking for ancient ritual. When a space has been cleared by Hector and Odysseus the fight takes place. Paris wins the toss, that is, his lot leaps first out of the helmet, which gives him the right to throw his spear first. The fight proceeds until Menelaus, after breaking his sword on his foe's helmet, seizes him by the helmet-crest and begins to drag him away. Suddenly the chin-strap breaks (Aphrodite did it of course) and Menelaus, angrily casting away the dangling helmet, turns back to find that Aphrodite "quite easily, being a goddess," had concealed Paris ἠέρι πολλῇ and carried him off to his own chamber, refreshed and revived him, enhanced his beauty and went off to fetch Helen. Why? Why this sudden interruption?

Simply because Aphrodite is Aphrodite and must go and bring back Helen. We have seen what kind of mood she was in, ready to leave Paris at any moment. When the goddess comes to her in the likeness of her own aged Spartan maid she knows who it is but she rebels. Why must she ever be Aphrodite's pawn, driven wherever passion leads? A word from the goddess and Helen was seized with fear. Aphrodite must be obeyed. Still half determined not to give herself to Paris again she enters his chamber and says bluntly: "You have come back from the fight. I would you had perished there, slain by a stronger man who was once my husband." Yet she would not have him fight again and easily succumbs to Alexander's beauty and flattering words. *Ἦ ῥα, καὶ ἄρχε λέχοσδε κιών· ἅμα δ' εἵπετ' ἄκοιτις.*[29] Meanwhile Menelaus went charging up and down like a wild beast, looking for his foe. So ends the third book; it is well worth the close attention of a reader new to the *Iliad* and that not merely for its beauty as poetry and for its variety. It shows us also the power and attraction of Helen, which is really the power of Aphrodite. For it was Aphrodite, not the helpless Helen, that caused the war and now she will not let it stop. Man had devised a means of settling the dispute but she will have none of it.

Such interference on the part of Aphrodite caused a lively discussion among the other gods who while dining had been watching the course of events. Zeus himself resented her action. He deemed Menelaus the victor and would gladly have seen the terms of the truce carried out and Helen restored. This would have saved Troy from destruction. But Hera and Pallas Athene do not want peace until Troy has fallen and Zeus, though he makes an eloquent plea for Troy, finally consents that the war shall be renewed. This means playing another trick; Athene is sent to cause a breach of the truce to be committed by the Trojans. She appears in the likeness of one of the Trojan heroes to Pandarus, a Lycian ally, and tells him what glory he would win by slaying Menelaus with an arrow from his famous gold-tipped bow made from the antlers of wild goat. Pandarus shoots and Athene sees to it that he hits Menelaus but only wounds him very slightly — a flesh wound with much bleeding causing Menelaus' thighs and armour to be stained with blood as a Lydian or a Carian woman stains ivory. Agamemnon is outraged at this breach of faith and decides to renew the war at once. Again man's designs have been frustrated by the gods. Now, leaving his brother in the care of a surgeon, he makes an unexpected tour of inspection. He is well pleased with Idomeneus of Crete and the two Aiantes and especially with Nestor who was lecturing his troops on the old-fashioned and correct use of chariots in attack. He upbraids Odysseus whose troops were idling and had not heard the latest orders. Odysseus boldly answers him, and Agamemnon, perhaps because he cannot afford to quarrel with any more of his best leaders, takes back his words. Next he chides Diomede who accepts the rebuke and resolves to do better. This is a forecast of Book v. The inspection over, the Achæans move into battle. A fine simile introduces the first series of slaughters which make up so much of the battle scenes of the *Iliad.*

---

[29] "He spake, and led the way to the couch, and with him followed his wife." (A. T. Murray, *The Iliad*, Vol. 1, p. 151)

> As when on the resounding shore the wave mounts higher and higher before the driving west wind; out at sea it first curls over, then it breaks upon the land with a mighty roar and with long, rolling curve dashes against the rocks and sends forth the salt sea foam afar; even so closer and closer moved the battalions of the Danaans steadily into battle.[30]

The book closes with an account of various slayings. In the fifth, Diomede, spurred by Agamemnon's reproaches and encouraged by Pallas Athene, goes forth to win glory. He kills Pandarus the Lycian and wounds Æneas, and when Æneas' mother, the goddess Aphrodite, is saving her son she actually receives a wound in the hand. Other gods come and take part. Apollo and Ares help the Trojans, Hera and Athene the Argives. Diomede's crowning feat is wounding the god of war himself in the groin. Ares complains bitterly to Zeus that mortals should not be allowed to do such things; to which Zeus very properly replies that Ares being god of war is responsible for the way in which it is fought, and that Ares is a detestable creature and too like his mother Hera.

---

[30] iv. 422–428.

Why are the exploits of Diomede recounted at length? They have nothing to do with Achilles and Agamemnon and could have been omitted without detriment to the main plot. The same may be said of the tenth book (Doloneia). But the first question is not whether they may be omitted but why they were included. It should be remembered that all that takes place between Achilles' defection and his return has its bearing on Achilles' attitude. An impression of length of time, of Achilles' long sullen brooding has to be conveyed; hence the wearisome battles culminating in the death of Patroclus. Homer varies the fighting as much as he can, by single combats (iii. and vii.), by a patrolling expedition (x.) or by a more personal account of individual prowess as here in the *Diomedeia.* Artistically then it needs no defence; it does not stand out awkwardly like the *Catalogue.* On the other hand it forms a kind of unity by itself. This suggests that the exploits of Diomede were a favourite theme in pre-Homeric poetry and that Homer knew and used more than one account in making the fifth book. In the next book too Diomede appears in a scene which can hardly be Homer's invention but looks like an old folktale — the meeting between Diomede and Glaucus, a Lycian of Argive ancestry, at which the two foes discover that their respective fathers were old friends.

In the sixth book occurs a lull in the battle and Hector returns inside the city. From a military point of view the lull is inexcusable; there was no reason for it. But Homer had to get Hector back to Troy. Hector and his mother (Hecabe), Hector and Helen, above all Hector and his wife and child (Andromache and Astyanax) all had to be shown us or we should have known nothing of the character of the great Trojan and had far less sympathy with him in his battle with Achilles. Homer therefore contrived a reason for bringing Hector back. But there is another blemish. This is not Hector's last visit to his home. The farewell scene between him and Andromache might perhaps have been reserved until Hector went forth to meet Achilles and his death. Here Homer nods; but in so doing he has given us an earlier insight into Hector and an earlier example of his own unmatched power of poetry. If *Iliad* iii. shows us Homer's typical variety, *Iliad* vi. shows us him at his most beautiful. In the next book Hector returns and the battle becomes fiercer. Apollo aids the Trojans, Pallas Athene the Argives. They agree that instead of continuing the general engagement Hector shall issue a challenge to single combat. Nine Achæans accept the challenge and the lot fell to Aias (Ajax), son of Telamon. They fought till evening without decisive result and parted friends, Hector giving Aias a sword, and Aias replying with a belt, an interesting piece of chivalry. On both sides there is now a desire for a truce for the burning of the bodies of those slain. Antenor suggests to Paris that he might even now offer to surrender Helen and end the war. Paris refuses. The truce is made but no peace; each side collects and burns its dead. Around their pyre the Achæans built a rath, which also formed part of a wall to protect the ships. In the eighth book Zeus redeems his promise to Thetis and gives a victory to the Trojans. Before the battle he weighs in a balance the fates of each side. That of the Achæans sinks and they will be defeated. Even the will of Zeus is subject to Fate. He forbids the gods to take part in this battle with threats of dire punishment. After an initial success the Argives are repulsed and in spite of a magnificent stand by Nestor and Diomede are driven back into the space between the ships and the newly built wall and trench. But Hector is unable to press his advantage and the ships are saved. Yet Achilles' prophecy (i. 233, see p. 24) has come true; the Achæans are in peril, Agamemnon is useless, they need Achilles, but will he help them or will he still cling to his selfish resentment?

After this defeat Agamemnon seriously considers the abandonment of the siege. Diomede objects and practically calls Agamemnon a coward. At a full meeting Nestor chides him for his folly in angering Achilles at the start and suggests that they should now try to appease him. Agamemnon with characteristic instability submitted at once; he usually did so when anyone had the courage to stand up to him. But he generously admits that he was in the wrong and offers, if Achilles will return, to give him much gold, iron, horses and women, including Briseis, and after the war to make him his son-in-law. Aias and Odysseus convey this message to Achilles, who is genuinely glad to see his old companions in arms; after Odysseus has put forward the king's offer, he shows himself as surly and unreasonable as ever. He makes a long speech setting forth his old grievances. He does not believe in Agamemnon's promises or trust his word. "He has utterly deceived me," he says, "and done me wrong; he will have no second chance to beguile me with words." He threatens to return home altogether and the embassy returns empty-handed. Achilles is not here (Bk. ix.) seen in a favourable light. Agreeableness was never part of his character. His nobler qualities do not yet appear, but in the end this refusal serves by contrast to enhance his greatness. He does for his friend's sake what he now refuses to do for a rich reward. That night Agamemnon was (Bk. x.) almost panic-stricken. He goes to seek Nestor's advice and together with Menelaus they rouse the other chiefs. Nestor calls for volunteers for a raiding party. He wants to find out whether the Trojans will continue to hem them close or return to their city. Diomede volunteers and chooses Odysseus to accompany him. Meanwhile Hector had sent out a scout Dolon. He paid for the mistake of sending one only, for Dolon was captured by Diomede and Odysseus who, when they had got from him what information they could, slew him. Acting on their knowledge they found and captured the famous Thracian horses of Rhesus. Then they returned, greatly pleased, and so was everyone else, even Nestor. Yet from a military point of view such an exploit was worthless, except in so far as its success gave courage to the others. They did not bring back the required information and killed the spy who might have told them. They did, it is true, find out a good deal about the dispositions of the Trojans and their allies, but Dolon by astutely appealing to Hellenic cupidity put them off the scent of more important information. Nothing more is said about it; after congratulations on their return the exploit is not again alluded to nor the information utilized. The incident of Dolon had served its purpose and was forgotten; and its purpose was not military but only literary. Homer, or perhaps an interpolator, thought that a night patrol and capture of a spy would fit in well here and amuse an audience; but they are not very happily worked into the story.[31] Behind the capture of Rhesus' horses there may lie an historical tradition of some kind but in the absence of decisive details we cannot say what it was.[32]

The failure of the embassy to Achilles leads to more long and wearisome fighting in which at the beginning (Bk. xi.) Agamemnon takes part. This is relieved by the unexpected arrival of Patroclus. Achilles, who had been watching from afar, had sent him to find out who was tending the wounded. This looks like a mere excuse. Though he would not have admitted it to himself, he wants to keep in touch with the other Achæans. He is feeling his self-imposed isolation more than he thought. Patroclus on arrival was entertained by Nestor who talked incessantly and suggested that Patroclus might use his influence to persuade Achilles to return. The young man does not at once go back. Achilles' slowly shifting mind cannot be hurried and the Achæans must be driven to yet more desperate straits. We do not see Achilles again till the opening of Book xvi. Meanwhile there is all the fighting by the wall of the Argive camp. Sarpedon makes a breach in it and the Greeks are driven seawards (Bk. xii.). Aias and Idomeneus with the help of the god Poseidon make a valiant stand (Bk. xiii.) but things looked black for the Achæans, and Agamemnon, again thinking of flight, is again chidden by Odysseus, thinking of booty. Meanwhile Hera saw their plight. This time, instead of appealing to Zeus to cease from favouring the Trojans, she entices him to sleep with her, so that he should see nothing of the help which Poseidon was giving the Achæans. The ruse is successful and Hector's men retire. Poseidon's help has little to do with it and the whole of the Διὸς ἀπάτη might have been omitted but not with any advantage. Some have found fault with it as being offensive to modern taste, but it is quite clear that it is intended as a piece of light relief in the middle of the description of the fighting. In the next book (xv.) after Zeus awakes, the battle swings again in favour of the Trojans who actually press the Argives back upon their ships and seek to fire them. Meanwhile Patroclus returns. He is greatly concerned at the plight of the Achæans but knows better than to ask Achilles to change his attitude on that account. Instead he asks for the use of Achilles' armour, explaining that their own ships are now in danger and that he and the Myrmidons should defend them. Achilles is so moved by this argument that it lures him into a lapse of memory. "I said I would not cease from wrath save only when the war-cry and the fighting came near to my own ships." He had said nothing of the kind; but thus do men in the utmost good faith justify their actions. That he had only half convinced himself is shown by his not fighting himself but allowing Patroclus' request — to be sent wearing his friend's armour. This, he thought, will scare the Trojans; but he gives Patroclus strict injunctions not to exceed his orders, he is to secure the Myrmidons' ships and then return at once. Here Achilles makes the fatal blunder which is the turning-point in the action. Behind an apparently innocent order to his subordinate lie vacillation and wrong motive. He thought he saw an easy way out. He wanted to save his ships and his own face at the same time and Patroclus' suggestion looked like an easy way of doing it.

---

[31] "It presupposes the *Iliad* but is nowhere presupposed in it." — Schmid.

[32] To connect it with fighting against Thracians at the founding of Abdera or the Athenian settlement in the Chersonese in the sixth century would be ridiculous.

The character of Achilles is at its lowest ebb; he has allowed his resentment to become such an obsession that he exposes Patroclus to danger in order that he may continue to stand on his own dignity. Here he almost forfeits our sympathy, but not quite. For his folly he will pay a heavy price and he is doomed to die young, but will he first vindicate his character? The gloomy isolation is drawing to a close. For fifteen books of the *Iliad* we have seen only the sullen and obscure figure, no nobleness or courage to justify his renown. It is for this that we are now waiting to vindicate Achilles. Avenging Patroclus and slaying Hector will not be enough. Not till the last scene of the last book are we satisfied. That is why the *Iliad* ends not with the Fall of Troy but with the restoration of Hector's body to the aged Priam.

Patroclus as we know exceeded his orders and did so magnificently. There is nothing wearisome about the sixteenth book; it is not a succession of *ἀνδροκτασίαι* but a thrilling and tragic account of a young man who in his first big command turned the tide of battle against one of the most dangerous of the Trojans (Sarpedon), only to be slain himself by Hector. Hector strips off the goodly armour of Achilles but for the body of the young man a long and desperate struggle ensues in which Menelaus plays an important part (Bk. xvii.). The news of Patroclus' death is brought to Achilles (xviii.), whose mother Thetis comes to comfort him. She tells him too that if he slays Hector he will himself die soon after. But life means little to Achilles now:

> Straightway may I die since I could not be at hand to save my comrade when they slew him. He has fallen far from his country and had not me to help him in the fight. Now therefore since I return not to my own native land, since I was no help to Patroclus — or to all my other many comrades who were slain by noble Hector, but I sit beside my ships, a worthless clod of earth . . . — may strife perish utterly from among gods and men, and wrath that moves even a wise man to be angry. . . . Now I go to find the slayer of him I loved,

> Hector; then will I accept death whensoever Zeus will bring it about and the other immortal gods.[33]

And in his lament for Patroclus he says:

> Yet now, Patroclus, since I go under the earth after thee, I will not honour thee with a funeral till I have brought hither the armour and head of Hector . . . and before thy pyre I will slaughter twelve noble sons of the Trojans.[34]

Meanwhile the goddess Thetis went to see Hephæstus, the smith-god, to ask him to make new armour for Achilles. The new armour is described, especially the shield which is ornamented with scenes of everyday life. Achilles and Agamemnon become reconciled and Briseis is returned to Achilles. The lament of Briseis over the recovered but mangled body of Patroclus is beautiful. He had often shown her kindness when Achilles had been harsh. Now on her return Achilles takes no notice of her. He is full of remorse and anger and thirst for vengeance. He will not eat with the Achæans and can barely be induced to allow them to do so before fighting.

> His teeth gnashed, his eyes flashed like a sheet of flame and unbearable pain pierced his heart.[35]

Clad in his new armour he speaks to no one save his favourite chariot horse Xanthos, miraculously endowed with speech by Hera.

In the twentieth book Zeus summons the gods and gives them liberty to assist either side. He does so merely because he wishes to enjoy himself (l. 23) and nothing further is to be deduced from his change of mind. Hera, Athene, Poseidon and Hephæstus are among those who side with the Greeks, while Ares, Apollo and Artemis help the Trojans. Achilles first meets Æneas who is saved curiously enough by Poseidon; next he meets Hector whom Phœbus Apollo saves and Achilles, furious at being thus baulked, ranges up and down in an orgy of slaying. In xxi. the gods continue to take part, even the river gods Scamander (Xanthus) and Simoeis who are angry with Achilles for polluting them with dead bodies. The rivers do so much damage to the Achæans that Hera calls in Hephæstus whose fire they cannot resist. Finally the Trojans retire within the walls and the gods go on fighting each other to the great amusement of Zeus (xxi. 389). But Hector stays out to fight Achilles (xxii.). Priam and Hecuba from the wall implore him not to stay alone; but he remains, pondering whether he should not lay down his arms and offer terms on behalf of his city; he does not however trust Achilles. On the approach of his foe Hector to our surprise flees in terror. On Olympus Zeus saw with concern and wondered if he should save him. Athene is roused: Hector must die. Zeus reassures her and she goes away but all the same he will give Hector a last chance, and while Achilles chases him round the city Zeus weighs the two in the balance. Hector's fate sinks to the ground and from that moment Apollo, who had given him strength and speed, ceased to help him. Thus are the gods subject to Fate. But Athene may help Achilles. She appears to Hector in the guise of his brother Deïphobus and, while pretending to help him, plays into Achilles' hands. When Hector realizes this he knows that Fate is against him, the gods have deserted him and he must die, but he cries:

---

[33] From *Il.*, xviii. 98–116.
[34] *Ib.*, 333–337.
[35] xix. 365–367.

> *μὴ μὰν ἀσπουδί γε καὶ ἀκλειῶς ἀπολοίμην,*
> *ἀλλὰ μέγα ῥέξας τι καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι.*
>
> (xxii. 304–305.) [36]

Achilles slays him but his fury has not abated. He will not allow Hector's body to be buried but will leave it to birds and dogs, indeed he would carve and eat of it himself if it gave him any pleasure. He lets the Achæans come and plunge their spears into the body, which he then ties to his chariot and drags round the city for all his folk to see. This savage conduct on Achilles' part is not to be excused by any plea of different standards of morality. Even if Homer has here purged an older story of still worse savagery, such as the dragging of the body still living, what remains is shocking. Probably a Homeric audience would regard the refusal of burial as even worse than the dragging. At all events Homer does not minimize the cruelty of Achilles' anger. There has not yet been any real change of heart, as we had hoped. He has only substituted one anger for another. During the burning of Patroclus' body and the long funeral games (xxiii.) held in his honour he becomes calmer though still liable to be stung to rage by any reminder of his wrongs. At night, as he lay sleepless, it was genuine grief that tormented him, yet in the morning he would often revert to the ghoulish pleasure of dragging Hector's body round Patroclus' pyre (xxiv. init.). But Zeus, who had always loved Hector, bids Thetis go and persuade her son to restore the body — miraculously preserved by Apollo. Achilles agreed at once. He was in fact sick of Hector's body. He could not go on dragging it for ever and we may surmise that he was not sorry to be rid of it and glad to have the command of Zeus which Thetis brought. Meanwhile Zeus had sent Iris to Priam saying: "Tell great-hearted Priam to go to the Achæans' ships and ransom his son, to bring gifts to Achilles . . . but to go alone and let none other of the Trojans go with him." [37] It was essential that Priam and Achilles should meet alone. At the head of a Trojan delegation Priam would have been received coldly and formally. The body would have been restored but nothing would have been done to show us Achilles' nobility, the depth of his affection, his understanding of Priam's sorrow, his admiration for the old man's courage. Only once in that famous scene, when Priam was a little suspicious, does he show any irritation, just enough to remind us that it is still the same hot-tempered Achilles. But not for long. He is deeply stirred by the sight of the old man and by his appeal to remember his own father Peleus. Both are in the same unhappy plight; Priam has lost Hector, his noblest son, Achilles Patroclus, his dearest friend. There is no complaining about the senselessness of it all; it is the lot of human kind:

---

[36] "Nay, but not without a struggle let me die, neither ingloriously, but in the working of some great deed for the hearing of men that are yet to be." (A. T. Murray, *The Iliad,* Vol. 2, p. 477)

---

[37] xxiv. 146–148.

> *ὣς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι,*
> *ζώειν ἀχνυμένοις · αὐτοὶ δέ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσί.*
> (525–526.)

"For this is the fate that gods have allotted to wretched mortals, to live in sorrow while they themselves are free from care." So the old man and the young realize that they have more in common than ever divided them. Next morning Priam returns early with Hector's body on a carriage, and with laments for Hector, the burning of his body and the building of his tomb the *Iliad* closes. "It was no accident, but a master-stroke of composition, that made the *Iliad* begin with the wrong done by King Agamemnon to a suppliant father and end with the right done by Achilles to the suppliant Priam." [38]

How much of this scheme was Homer's absolute invention is almost impossible to say. We have seen instances where he was clearly not inventing but using old material, but he must have been using old material constantly. Not only was the story old but the manner of telling it, the language, the repeated similes, lists of men slain, long conversations between combatants in battle, detailed descriptions of everyday deeds, such as yoking mules, and of objects, cups, armour, clothes. In all this Homer was probably following the traditional manner which his hearers liked and demanded. The outline of the story was also familiar. Where Homer departed from tradition either in manner or matter is difficult to say, but we have seen reason to believe that the Parting of Hector and Andromache was his own idea, and the meeting of Priam and Achilles, and perhaps the whole way of ending the story, waiting not for the death of Achilles or the Fall of Troy but for the rehabilitation of Achilles and the ransoming of the body. At all events one may assert with some probability that Homer was far in advance of his predecessors not only in poetry but in humanity and sympathy. Beyond that speculation is fruitless. Homer's own opinions and personality are completely hidden in the anonymity of Epic.

---

[38] J. T. Sheppard, *The Pattern of the Iliad*, p. 208.

The "Odyssey"

This ignorance about the man makes it impossible to say on personal grounds either that he could not have written the *Odyssey* too or that he must have. The similarities between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* do not prove common authorship since they are similarities due to the Epic tradition in language and style. Their differences do not prove diversity of authorship since they belong chiefly to the differences in the kind of story and the kind of people. On such lines discussion leads nowhere. On historical grounds it is agreed that the *Odyssey* is later than the *Iliad,* but it is not agreed whether it is so much later that it cannot have had the same author. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Ionia should have produced a second master of Epic technique, author of the *Odyssey*, but it is quite incredible that his name and every other trace of his existence should have entirely vanished and his poem been fathered on a predecessor.[39]

The historical content of the *Odyssey* is much less than that of the *Iliad.* At the most it does not amount to more than to say that there was an historical Odysseus who when he returned to Ithaca after the Trojan War slew those who had been paying attentions to his wife. That is at least historically probable though it remains unconfirmed. Beyond that the sources of the *Odyssey* are not to be found in historical traditions or tales of old heroes, but, apart from the poet's own inventions, in folk-lore and fairy-tale. The movements of Odysseus after

---

[39] But M. P. Nilsson (*Homer and Mycenæ,* p. 136) and G. Finsler (*Homer*, i. 1.66) are among the separatists, though they differ about dates of composition.

Troy, as told by himself at the Phæacian court, may be followed on the map for a while but he soon passes into fairyland and meets with Lotus-eaters, the giant Cyclops, the Sirens, Circe the Sorceress. His adventures among them are far more ancient than himself so to speak; Homer has attached them to the person of Odysseus. Possibly the story of the suitor-slaying should also be regarded as an old *motif* in folk-lore rather than history. There is no known history in the part played by Telemachus.

Scheme of the "Odyssey"

The scheme of the *Odyssey* embraces three sections, or rather three chief threads, each taken up in turn as may be necessary. One thread, the Wanderings, is dropped on Odysseus' return; the other two, the Quest of Telemachus and the Return and Vengeance, are gathered up together at the end. Although there are fewer important characters in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad*, the plot construction is more elaborate. It is not a straightforward narrative. The earlier adventures we only hear about later when he is recounting them at the court of Alcinous. Actually the poem begins some nine years after the Fall of Troy; Odysseus is on the island Ogygia where he has been living for eight years with Calypso. He had already come through many storms and dangers chiefly caused by Poseidon who hated him. But Poseidon was on a visit to the Ethiopians and in his absence Zeus and Athene arrange for Odysseus' escape from Ogygia. Athene goes to Ithaca and the second thread is picked up. She appears to Telemachus in the guise of an old friend of his father's who says that he has seen Odysseus but knows not for certain if he be still alive. Telemachus bemoans his father's absence during which the house has been a prey to greedy suitors for his mother Penelope's hand. The stranger suggests that Telemachus, now that he is a man, should go in search of his father; that he should go to Pylos and ask Nestor; to Sparta and ask Menelaus, the last of the Achæans to reach home. The stranger would not stay, and Telemachus knew in his heart that it was some god. He is in fact fired with a new idea and feels himself growing in stature because of it. That night he asserts himself first against his mother, who had naturally enough protested at the minstrel Phemius' choice of theme — the return from Troy. Next he addresses the suitors and boldly upbraids them. In the morning (Bk. ii.) he assembles the people of Ithaca, which had never been done since Odysseus' departure. The wooers are present, and one of them replies with a bitter attack on Penelope who, he says, has been deliberately encouraging first one then another of the suitors; she had promised to give her decision as soon as she had finished weaving a shroud for the aged Laertes, but, as one of the servants had revealed, she had been undoing at night what she had woven by day. An angry discussion ensues; the suitors will not believe that there is any chance of Odysseus returning. Finally Telemachus dissolves the assembly, retires to the seashore and appeals to the unknown god who had visited him the day before. Athene hears and repeats her advice that he should leave home and go in search of his father. He does not tell his mother or say good-bye to her; only the aged nurse Eurycleia helps him to make ready for the journey. In Book iii. Telemachus is at Pylos where he learns of Agamemnon's fate, but Nestor is unable to tell him much of Odysseus and suggests that he go to Sparta and ask Menelaus. Nestor's son accompanies him. Book iv. — Telemachus at Sparta — is much more enjoyable. From the moment when the two young men drive up to Menelaus' palace till their departure we are treated to a picture of royal hospitality, kindly conversation and noble generosity. The two men were clearly of noble birth, "of the seed of sceptre-bearing kings," and Menelaus is indignant that his groom should even ask whether he was to attend to their horses or let them proceed elsewhere. He will ask no questions about who they are until they have had hot baths, clean clothes and a sumptuous dinner. It happens that in the evening Menelaus, telling his guests about his collection of *objets d'art* and how he acquired them, mentioned the name of Odysseus. Menelaus notices the look on Telemachus' face and at that moment Helen comes in. She knows at once that it is Telemachus. Menelaus is delighted; Odysseus, he says, has been his best friend during the war and they have planned to settle down side by side when it was over. He tells them how Troy finally fell — the story of the Wooden Horse. But he tactfully waits till next morning before asking Telemachus what he is doing away from home. When Telemachus has told him, he recounts all he knows, all he had learned from Proteus the Old Man of the Sea when he had wrestled with him in Pharos. Proteus had told him among other things that Odysseus was a captive on Calypso's island. Telemachus is eager to depart, though he would gladly have prolonged his stay with Helen and Menelaus. The gift of horses and a chariot he declines; Ithaca is not good country for driving. So Menelaus gives him instead a silver bowl rimmed with gold. The book closes in Ithaca with the discovery of Telemachus' secret departure, the anger of the suitors who plot to murder him, and Penelope's grief.

The first four books have shown us chiefly Telemachus, a character probably Homer's own creation. and the friction between him and Penelope who was in an unhappy position. By nature faithful to her husband, she was yet young enough to desire a second marriage should he not return. Of Odysseus himself we have seen nothing, but already the diversity of material which Homer used is apparent. The crowd of suitors awaiting their chance, delayed by a web which is never finished, is folk-tale; so is Menelaus wrestling with the ever-changing Proteus. But the story of the web had nothing to do with the story of Odysseus. It was Homer who worked the one into the other and not altogether successfully. Penelope's web, though she tells Odysseus of it in Book xix., has no real function in the story, and the trick, as we saw in Book ii., was a failure. In the original folk-tale the fate of the web-spinning princess would have depended on the web and on the arrival of the delivering prince just at the last moment. This does not happen in the *Odyssey*.

Odysseus does not return until weeks after the completion of the web of which we have just learned. And yet in xxiv. 125 ff. we read of one of the slain suitors in Hades telling Agamemnon the story in the usual words but adding that at the very moment the web was finished Odysseus arrived. This is what ought to have happened if the story was to be of any real importance. But Homer had other ideas, other tales to be worked into the *Odyssey* and everything could not be sacrificed for this one. In the confused recollections of the dead suitor Odysseus arrived only in the nick of time, but in the actual story Homer scarcely uses the tale of the web.

The fifth book brings us to Odysseus who for eight years had been kept by Calypso on her island. Now Athene had persuaded Zeus to send Hermes to bid her release him. Calypso is one of the immortals, but nothing is known of her. Except for a description of her wonderful cave Homer tells us nothing. Her name might mean the "Hider" (καλύπτειν), given her since she hid Odysseus for eight years. Probably her existence as well as her name was due to this. Homer had to prolong Odysseus' absence in order that Telemachus might be grown up and able to play his part, and it looks as if Calypso had been created for this purpose. Now with her help he builds and stores with food a heavily-made raft with sails and steering-oar. In this he leaves Ogygia and is at sea for seventeen days. Poseidon, returned from the Ethiopians, sends a severe storm which wrecks his ship. Nearly dead with exhaustion he manages with the help of the goddess Leucothea to swim into a river mouth, land and fall asleep among the rocks. The fifth book, which is full of "the surge and thunder of the *Odyssey*," closes on a quiet note. Universally popular are the next seven books, especially the sixth, in which Odysseus is discovered by the princess Nausicaa. She has come with her companions to the river to wash clothes, her own and her brothers'. After the washing they are playing with a ball. One of the girls misses a catch and the ball runs down a gully near where Odysseus was sleeping:

From them all outbroke
A long shrill cry; and bright Odysseus woke;
And sitting up he pondered inwardly:
"O me! what land is this of mortal folk?

Are these fierce savages and men of blood,
Or hospitable and of goodly mood? . . ."

So saying, bright Odysseus from his bed
Crept, and from off the bushy thicket shred
A leafy bough to hide his nakedness,
And like a lion on the mountains bred

Strode forth. . . .
Dreadful to them the sea-stained man drew nigh:
And up and down they ran dispersedly
Along the jutting beaches; only then
The daughter of Alcinous did not fly:

Such courage put Athena in her breast:
Unfaltering she stood up and undistressed,
And faced him: and Odysseus held debate,
Whether to clasp her knees in prayer were best,

Or where he stood with supplicating speech
From far away her mercy to beseech
Till thus debating, best he thought from far
The lovely maiden with soft words to reach;

Lest, if her knees he touched, she wrathfully
Might turn away.[40]

Nausicaa offers him clothes from their cart and oil to anoint himself, and when she sees Odysseus bathed and clothed she says to her companions:

"Uncomely at the first he seemed to be.
But now the Gods are not more fair than he.
Who hold wide heaven. I would that such an one
Dwelt here and bore a husband's name to me,

---

[40] From VI., 116–146. This and the other citations from the *Odyssey* are from J. W. Mackail's translation. Oxford, 1932.

And in this country chose to stay his feet.
Now, maidens, give our guest to drink and eat."

So Odysseus shares their picnic and they make ready to return to the city. Nausicaa's modesty forbids her to bring the stranger back in their own waggon lest someone say:

"And who is this, the stranger tall and gay
That here beside Nausicaa takes his way?
And where may she have found him? Aye, no doubt
She brings a husband back with her to-day!"

She asks him to walk some way behind and on reaching the town to wait outside for a while and later to enter and inquire for the house of her father Alcinous, king of the Phæacians, and then:

"Pass quickly up the hall
Straight to my mother. In the firelight she
Sits by the hearth. . . .
And my father's chair
Next hers, where he, the wine-cup in his hand,

Sits like a God. Yet pass him by nor stay
Till round our mother's knees your hands you lay."

It is amusing to note that Nausicaa advises him first to approach her mother. Alcinous would help anybody but Arete's interest should be secured first. With her help he may count on afterwards reaching his home.

So, guided by Athene who renders him invisible, (Bk. vii.) Odysseus comes to the city of Phæacia, the perfect country of fairy-tale, where a wise king rules over a virtuous people, who dance and play games and enjoy themselves. The men are handsome and the maidens fair. They do not go to war but excel in the arts of peace; their women are the finest weavers and in the king's garden there are fruit and flowers all the year round. Alcinous and his queen Arete welcome him kindly with that courteous hospitality which is everywhere present in the Homeric poems:

Then a maid bringing in a ewer of gold,
Poured forth above a silver basin fair

Water for washing, and beside him spread
A polished table, whereon wheaten bread
With divers dainties the grave housekeeper
Laid largely, that the stranger might be fed.

When the others had all retired that night Odysseus sat talking with the king and queen; he tells them of his escape from Calypso, his landing on the Phæacian coast and his rescue by Nausicaa. Of Troy he says nothing. Alcinous' heart warms toward his guest whom he would gladly, he says, have accepted as a son-in-law. Next day (Bk. viii.) the blind Demodocus entertains the company with tales of Troy, of Achilles and of Odysseus, whose name has not yet been revealed. Odysseus is overcome with emotion and Alcinous noticing this tactfully suggests a change of entertainment — a sports contest. All the young Phæacians take part and urge Odysseus to come too. At first he will not; he does not feel fit or inclined after all his trials. But stung by a rude taunt from one of them he consents and flings a heavy quoit farther than the best of them. Then Demodocus again performs and tells the story of Ares and Aphrodite trapped in adultery by clever devices of Hephæstus. Among the good Phæacians themselves such conduct would have been regarded as scandalous but among the gods they found it very entertaining, and laughed as heartily as the gods in the story who gathered round to see the trap. It is the divine comic interlude again like the deception of Zeus in the *Iliad.* After more games and dancing the Phæacians give gifts to Odysseus; Euryalus who had been so rude to him gives an especially handsome one. That evening Odysseus is given a place of honour, and himself carves a slice and orders it to be taken to Demodocus. This apparent usurping of his host's place is odd. It has been suggested [41] that if Odysseus had been Nausicaa's betrothed, it would have been quite in order, and in the original folk-tale the prince from overseas would naturally have married the princess. As in the more obvious case of Penelope's web the old tale has not been cut quite to fit its new surroundings. Then Demodocus at Odysseus' request again sings of Troy — of the Wooden Horse. Again Alcinous observes the stranger's emotion and is curious to know who he can be and begs him to tell them his story.

---

[41] By W. J. Woodhouse, *The Composition of Homer's Odyssey*, p. 64. This is but one instance of several showing how Homer is adapting this old folk-tale. See Woodhouse, ch. vii.

Odysseus begins with his departure from Troy and the next four books (ix.–xii.) are devoted to the story of his wanderings before he was cast up on Calypso's island. These are not the wanderings of any historical Odysseus. They are imaginary adventures located largely in imaginary countries among fabulous creatures. This kind of story is far older than Homer, older even than Odysseus; it belongs to the time when men first began to stir abroad and seek new things overseas. Some did not return. Some returned in a sorry state, less ship and comrades but well able to pitch a good yarn. These yarns existed for generations before Homer seized upon the idea of attaching them to Odysseus. Of course we cannot be sure that this was entirely due to Homer. The story of Odysseus may have received some accretions before. But thanks to Homer these yarns passed into literature and have become inseparable from the figure of the wandering Odysseus. And they have been told us in a language and a measure as full of enchantment as the lands they speak of. The same stately metre in which were portrayed Hector and Andromache's farewell, Priam and Achilles and all the weight of human sorrow in the *Iliad* now tells us of the Lotus-eaters, of Polyphemus the Cyclops tending his beloved sheep and devouring men raw, of the ingenious escape of Odysseus and his men from his clutches — stories familiar to us from childhood. The tenth book is still more fairy-tale, Æolus and his bag of winds, the huge Læstrygonians, Circe the witch who changed some of Odysseus' comrades into swine. She is persuaded to restore them and the whole company lived there for a year. Then Odysseus begs to be sent forth.

He must first, says Circe, visit the house of Hades and consult the shade of the prophet Tiresias. Thus the eleventh book is linked with the tenth. When Odysseus by magic rites summons Tiresias and other shades from the dead and questions them, we are no longer in the realm of travellers' tales from fairyland but of more orthodox Greek mythology. First Odysseus naturally inquires of his own people, his wife, his son and his aged father. Tiresias tells him his own future and the manner of his home-coming, but the succession of women figures which he saw after that has nothing to do with him — Alcmene mother of Heracles, Epicaste mother of Œdipus, Phædra, Ariadne. This point, the middle of Book xi., is therefore skilfully chosen for a break in the narrative. Odysseus is tired and would like to go to bed but Alcinous begs him to continue. So he resumes and tells of his meeting with Agamemnon who told him how he had been murdered on his return by his wife, and warns him to be very careful when he comes back to Ithaca, not that he suspects Penelope the Wise but no woman is to be trusted. This is the third allusion in the *Odyssey* to Agamemnon's murder; Homer emphasizes the contrast between the two returns and Odysseus as we shall see takes the warning to heart and approaches his house in disguise.[42] Next Achilles, bitter as ever, unreconciled to death and in no way consoled by the glory of his life:

> Speak not soft words concerning death to me,
> Glorious Odysseus: rather had I be
> A thrall upon the acres to a man
> Portionless and sunk low in poverty,
>
> Than over all the perished dead below
> Hold lordship. (488–491.)

Then come Tantalus, Sisyphus and Heracles. Fearful of seeing a Gorgon Odysseus departs and (Bk. xii.) returns to Circe's island to burn the body of a dead comrade.

---

[42] In l. 449 Agamemnon speaks of Telemachus as being already a man. Is this a lapse of memory on his part or has Homer forgotten that Odysseus has not yet spent his eight years with Calypso?

Circe warns him of dangers to come — Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis and especially not to touch the oxen of Hyperion the Sun. We are now back again in the land of Travellers' Tales. They pass by the Sirens, the ears of all save Odysseus being stopped with wax. They escape Scylla and Charybdis with the loss of six men. But detained by contrary winds in Thrinacia his companions devour some of Hyperion's kine. For this they all perish in a storm; only Odysseus survives; he lashes mast and keel together and paddles himself back through Scylla and Charybdis. When Charybdis engulfed his improvised raft he clung for hours to an overhanging tree:

> But I to the wild fig-tree's boughs outspread
> Reached up and like a bat hung fastened there. . . .
> There desperately to the twigs I clung
> Till she should vomit up the mast and keel;
> And late and longed for were the spars outflung.

Finally he is cast up on Calypso's island and his story told to Alcinous is ended.

In the thirteenth book Odysseus, fast asleep, is deposited on the coast of Ithaca by the crew of a Phæacian ship; but he is by no means safely home yet. He is entirely alone and at first has no ally save Athene whose presence is now even more frequent than during his wanderings. First Odysseus must be disguised from his enemies and only recognized by his friends when he is sure of their fidelity. Telemachus, the swine-herd Eumæus, the nurse Eurycleia all recognize him before Penelope, who does not know him till after the slaying of the suitors in Book xxii. Second, he must have his revenge; it was part of the story; but Homer not unnaturally makes this ruthless slaying more justifiable by depicting their insolent conduct towards Odysseus. He might well however have purged it of the savage hanging of the unchaste maidservants. Moreover the revenge had to be carefully planned with the help of Athene and Telemachus — the contest with the bow and the removal of the arms from the walls. Thus the second half of the *Odyssey* is a subtle combination of various tales. Not only is the *Tele-*

macheia linked up with the story of the Return but many other and more ancient tales are worked in. As we have already seen in the case of Penelope's web this amalgamation of different traditions inevitably leaves rough places and inconsistencies. Yet on the whole it has been carried out with much skill and if there is no haste about the *dénouement* of the *Odyssey* there is certainly no relaxing of interest. When he awakes on the Ithacan coast he does not know where he is; nor does he recognize that it is Athene who speaks when a young man approaches and informs him that he is in Ithaca. So he tells her a fictitious tale of how he came there. Then she reveals herself and disguises him and tells him to go to Eumæus, his swine-herd, who is loyal. This he does (Bk. xiv.) and is entertained with rough and pleasant hospitality. He does not reveal his identity but pitches another and longer yarn about a raid on Egypt in which he had taken part after Troy; subsequently he was taken prisoner by Phœnicians whose ship was wrecked and he was cast up in Thesprotia. There, he says, he heard news of Odysseus who had come there but at that moment had gone to Dodona to consult the oracle, but would soon return as a ship was waiting to convey him to Ithaca. This tale is interesting: the raid on Egypt may go back to the Heroic Age; the capture by Phœnicians must be centuries later. The visit to Thesprotia may possibly be a genuine tradition about the historical Odysseus. In Book xv. we go back to Telemachus whom we left somewhat abruptly in the act of taking his leave of Menelaus who was just giving him a silver bowl. The presentation of the bowl is now related again in almost the same words (xv. 114–119). Helen adds her gift and the narrative proceeds. This method of picking up the thread strikes us as a little clumsy. We feel that in Book iv. the narrative should have been broken off sooner, before Telemachus thought of departing. But in the text as we have it there is no place where the break could be made. Menelaus' story closed with the offer of a gift to Telemachus, and he had to reply before the scene could be moved. A repetition of the last incident in the *Telemacheia* was perhaps a good enough way of reminding us that we had left Telemachus in Sparta. But there is another slight blemish. When Telemachus was in such a hurry to depart after hearing from Menelaus that his father was in Ogygia we supposed that he was eager to continue his quest. At least we expect to know what he thought of the information. But now in xv. Athene tells him to go back to Ithaca. Such a course is entirely reasonable; he has no idea where to look for Calypso's island, so he gives up the quest. But nothing of this reasoning appears in the *Odyssey*. Except that he has grown in stature and confidence, Telemachus has not helped much. On his return to Ithaca he joins Odysseus and Eumæus who are still (Bk. xvi.) entertaining each other with stories in the swine-herd's hut. Odysseus reveals himself to his son but not yet to Eumæus. Telemachus returns to his mother (xvii.) while Eumæus brings Odysseus the stranger into the town. The suitors behave insolently towards him and he shows his strength by severely punishing a rival beggar (xviii.). At this moment Penelope elects to come down beautifully dressed and declare her readiness to marry, not without a protest at the way her house has been abused. But except that the suitors bestow gifts on her, nothing more happens. Why is this scene introduced? Probably to alarm and excite us. We wonder if Odysseus has come too late after all. That danger over and the suitors and Penelope out of the hall, Odysseus and Telemachus remove all the arms hanging on the wall. Here is another slight confusion. This plan had been discussed before (xvi. 281–307) and Telemachus had been told when the time came to keep back two sets of armour for themselves, but now in Book xix. this is not done. There is no apparent reason for the change of plan; Odysseus did not yet know about the bow contest. The lapse is on the poet's part, explain it how we will. In the same book occurs the first meeting between Odysseus and Penelope. She has taken an interest in the stranger from the start and now she sees him and questions him. At first he is unwilling to speak but finally he tells his tale. It is not quite the same as the last but he says that he has seen Odysseus of whom he gives an exact description and mentions his visit to Thesprotia and Dodona and assures Penelope that he will soon return. Penelope is moved and bids him be entertained becomingly. (Telemachus always used to say that his mother could never distinguish between good and bad-class beggars.) Eurycleia is to wash his feet. She has already noticed a resemblance to Odysseus and he is afraid of being recognized:

> But from the hearth his seat Odysseus laid
> Into the shadow, suddenly afraid
> Lest when she handled him she might perceive
> The scar, and revelation so be made. (xix. 388–391.)

But she felt and knew the scar and we are then told how he got it.

> This the old woman, when she held the limb
> Between her palms and felt it, rubbing him,
> Knew and let go his leg, and in the bath
> It fell with clatter of the brazen brim;
>
> And the bath tilted overthwart, and lay
> Spilling the water: and at once dismay
> And gladness seized her, and her eyes with tears
> Filled up and her voice could not find its way.
>
> Then to Odysseus' chin her hand she set,
> And cried "Odysseus' self you are, and yet
> I knew you not, O nursling well-beloved,
> Before my hands about my king had met."
> (467–475.)

Odysseus will not let her tell Penelope yet. It is part of his plan not to reveal himself until he can get rid of the suitors. And it was part of Homer's plan not to use the Sign of the Scar for the final recognition but only to tantalize us by postponing it again. Penelope continues to toy with the idea of re-marrying and again we begin to wonder if all is lost. She tells the stranger that she proposes to take whichever one of the suitors can perform a feat which Odysseus used to do, to shoot an arrow through the handle-holes of twelve axe-blades in a row.

Odysseus welcomes the idea and assures her that none of them will ever do it before Odysseus himself comes home. Again we feel Penelope to be on the verge of recognition but again we are baulked. The next Book, xx., is full of further wrangling between the stranger and the suitors and only in xxi. is the scene set for the contest. The suitors all fail; so much was in the folk-tale but this is skilfully connected with a plot made by Odysseus, Telemachus, Eurycleia and the neat-herd and swine-herd to whom he now reveals himself. Before Odysseus takes his turn with the bow, Penelope is to be got out of the room and Eurycleia is to lock all the doors. In xxii. as soon as he has performed the feat he strips off his disguise and he and Telemachus proceed to slay the suitors one by one. The maid-servants who had been unfaithful are made to clean up the blood-stained hall and are then hanged. Thus Penelope was not present at the firing of the shot, which would surely have caused her to recognize her husband. Homer again only uses part of the folk-tale and postpones the recognition. In xxiii. Eurycleia tells Penelope that Odysseus has come back and slain the suitors and that the stranger is he. The queen is quite incredulous. Almost by accident Odysseus, who had become a little annoyed at her stubbornness, lets fall a remark about the building of their marriage-bed:

So said he; and her soul and body grew
As water, when the token sure she knew
Told by Odysseus, weeping then she ran
Straight up and round his neck her arms she threw,

And kissed his head and cried: "Ah, hate me not
Odysseus, seeing that wisdom you have got
Most of mankind in all things; but the Gods
Wrought for us dole, being jealous that our lot

Should be to live together evermore
In joy of youth until we reached the door
Of age; but be not angered or displeased
If at first sight I my embrace forbore."

(xxiii. 205–214.)

When the reunited pair go happily to bed (xxiii. 297) we feel that the story is ended and at this point according to the Alexandrian critics Aristarchus and Aristophanes the genuine *Odyssey* came to an end. But the poem as we have it is not yet over. In the remaining part of xxiii. Odysseus tells Penelope of his wanderings which are briefly summarized. They discuss some domestic arrangements and next morning he goes off with Telemachus to see his old retired father Laertes. In xxiv. Hermes gathers together the ghosts of dead heroes, Achilles, Agamemnon and others, who discuss their deaths and burials. They are joined by the ghosts of the recently slain suitors. One of them, Amphimedon, tells his version of their story. We have already (p. 49) referred to l. 125 ff. in which the finishing of the web is made to coincide with the arrival of Odysseus. Amphimedon also says that it was Odysseus who suggested the bow-contest to Penelope. Either he really believed this and thought Penelope was in the plot all along or else, as is more likely, it is another case of a different story which has not been wholly adapted to fit the poem. Thus Agamemnon learns that his warning had been taken to heart and bitterly contrasts Odysseus' homecoming with his own. Then we return to the father and son on their way to the farm-house of the aged Laertes. After telling him a new and fictitious tale Odysseus finally reveals himself and the three together with an old servant Dolius and his six sons enjoy a meal. Meanwhile trouble has been brewing. The relatives of the dead suitors are up in arms. Moderate counsels restrain some but the rest march on Laertes' house. With the help of Athene the ten men do valiantly. Then the goddess again intervenes and calls upon all the people of Ithaca to make peace, which they do. It is difficult for an impartial reader to make up his mind about the genuineness of this appendix to the story. Many follow the Alexandrian critics and reject it as spoiling the proper conclusion — the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope. Others say this is mere romanticism and point to the discrepancies noted as evidence of difference of authorship. To this it is replied that a real interpolator would have been more careful and that the evidence points the other way. In reality this kind of evidence is too slight to be used either way. Broadly speaking there are three things in this ending: the assembly of the ghosts, the visit to Laertes and the fight with the suitors' relatives. Of these the first is a natural conclusion to the continual parallels between the stories of Agamemnon and Odysseus, the second was an obvious duty, the third the inevitable result of a king putting to death the leading men in the land. It is all perfectly logical but it does not therefore follow that Homer must have been the author. The question, Was Homer romantic or logical?, is idle. Lines xxiii. 297 to the end of xxiv. certainly look like an afterthought, probably Homer's own afterthought, but if not, then the work of someone so remarkably skilful that the world is poorer for his loss.

Homeric Criticism and the Homeric Question

After Homer's death his poems continued to be recited, probably in parts, and they soon became a text-book for the education of the young. The story, preserved by Cicero,[43] that Pisistratus the tyrant of Athens had scattered remains collected and edited has been wrongly interpreted.[44] Citations from Homer in fifth and fourth-century writers show but little deviation from our text, which is somewhat remarkable considering the inauspicious start in life of Homer's text. They do, however, show a number of lines not in our texts. Homeric criticism proper begins in Alexandria in the third and second centuries B.C. It is hard to assess how much we owe to the work of Zenodotus, Aristophanes (of Byzantium) and Aristarchus since we know them only through excerpts and statements in later writers. We know that Aristarchus used the division of each of the poems into twenty-four books, that he thought Homer was an Athenian, and regarded xxiii. 297 as the conclusion of the *Odyssey* proper. There was much bitterness between rival schools of criticism, especially about the allegorical interpretation of the poems. Some of the lesser critics (called *χωρίζοντες*, Separators) had a theory, recently revived, that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were by different authors. Papyrus fragments of various dates have preserved for us a few scraps of criticism, but our earliest commentary on the *Iliad* is a collection of notes (scholia) contained in a Venetian manuscript of the poem of the tenth or eleventh century A.D. This is an abridgement of the work of four commentators who lived probably between A.D. 100 and 400. There are other scholia in other MSS. The *Odyssey* is not so well provided with scholia as the *Iliad.* Educated Romans read Homer but they have added little to our knowledge. In the Middle Ages the poems were unknown in Western Europe but in the Byzantine Empire they were studied and annotated, notably by Eustathius, bishop of Thessalonica in the twelfth century. With the Renaissance the poems again became known in the West and were first printed in Florence in 1480. But serious Homeric criticism made no further progress until about the eighteenth century. Richard Bentley's discovery of a lost Greek letter Ϝ (digamma), the analysis of D'Aubignac and Wolf, the topographical studies of Robert Wood opened up a new era. Wood raised many questions about Homeric culture, notably the question of the antiquity of writing. The supposed ignorance of writing was one of the pillars in the arguments of Wolf, who, like his predecessor D'Aubignac, attempted to divide the poems into Homeric and non-Homeric parts. Bentley's discovery led to further study of the language and linguistic criteria of relative lateness were evolved. During the nineteenth century a bitter war was waged and in some circles it was considered ridiculous to speak of Homer's *Iliad;* analysis had reduced his share to little or nothing. Some denied his existence altogether, and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were said simply to have grown out of old lays. Others said they were the result of successive additions to an original kernel. Numerous theories and analyses were tried but no agreement was reached. Gradually it came to be realized that this divergence could only be the result of a misreading of facts. For certain facts were there, even though some of Homer's staunchest friends shut their eyes to them. Quite unwarranted conclusions, for example, were drawn from the fact that whole lines or even passages occur more than once in the same poem, which is simply a regular feature of epic style. Too much was made of minor inconsistencies and Homer's "nods" were made to bear the weight of theories of divided authorship. Again, the fact that the cultural background is composite and shows elements separated by many centuries led to attempts to divide the poems into sections or strata according to age. It was hoped that the gradual development of civilization would be found to reflect the gradual growth of the poems. But the two did not coincide at all, and often the earliest cultural elements were found to be mentioned in parts which by other criteria had been deemed late. The error lay in using the facts to establish a stratification which never existed. The elements of Mycenæan culture, present along with much later elements cannot, as we have seen, be made to prove an actual mingling of culture, nor yet a difference of age or authorship, but they do indicate the great antiquity of epic traditional matter and traditional style. The Homeric question has shifted its ground; it has shaken off much that was cumbersome though many of its problems remain unsolved. At the same time literary analysis has served a useful purpose; it has shown us something of Homer's material and enabled us better to appreciate his skill in using it. Much disagreement and even bitterness still exists and perhaps always will. There are few, if any, to-day who would say with G. Hermann "Nego Homerum, nego Hesiodum fuisse," indeed there are many "Separators" who postulate two Homers, one for each poem. But while his existence is generally accepted, the amount of his debt to his predecessors can hardly be correctly assessed while those predecessors are only known to us through Homer's own work.

---

[43] *De Oratore*, iii. 137.

[44] As if it proved that the Homeric poems as we know them cannot be older than the time of Pisistratus. But Homer as author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was known, *e.g.* to Xenophanes, long before then. Doubtless we owe a debt to Pisistratus, but his was a work of rescue not of creation.

The Epic Cycle

The Epic Cycle is a group of lost poems relating chiefly to the Trojan and Theban Wars. We possess only a few fragmentary citations in later writers. There was not so far as we know any great epic comparable to the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* (which were, however, included in the cycle), only separate poems relating to various incidents in history or mythology. They are impossible to date accurately. The events they speak of are as old as heroic times and many of them are mentioned in the Homeric poems, but the surviving fragments are later than Homer. That is to say, the writers of these poems had, like Homer, access to very ancient epical material. They in turn provided material for later poets, Pindar and the tragedians, as well as vase-painters and other artists. These lost poems were still known and read by Alexandrian scholars, but not by Proclus,[45] who, however, has told us a good deal about them. Some were ascribed to Homer but not, in early times, the entire collection. Still, Simonides (Fr. 32) and a remark of Æschylus (*ap.* Athenæus viii. 347*e*) that his plays were "slices of Homer's great banquets" seem to show that in classical times Homer was credited with more than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The ascription of any of these poems to Homer was probably quite incorrect, but it is in accord with what we know of literary history at the time, when there was a tendency to give Homer credit for any early hexameter verse not of the Hesiodic school.

Apart from the *Battle of the Titans* the lost poems of the Epic Cycle fall into two groups, the Theban and the Trojan. The former embraces the story of Œdipus (Οἰδιπόδεια), the war of the Seven against Thebes (*Thebais*) and the *Epigoni*, sequel to the war. In the Trojan group were the *Cypria*, relating the events before the *Iliad*, which Herodotus (ii. 117) says was wrongly ascribed to Homer, the *Æthiopis*, the story of Achilles after the *Iliad*, the *Sack of Troy* (Ἰλίου πέρσις) with the story of the Wooden Horse and the summoning of Philoctetes, the

---

[45] Fifth century A.D.

Little Iliad, a four-book summary of the whole including the death of Ajax, the Νόστοι or return of the Trojan heroes, and the Τηλεγόνεια, story of Telegonus, son of Odysseus by Circe. Other lost poems not in the Cycle were the *Capture of Œchalia* by Heracles, probably the source of Sophocles' *Trachiniæ*, the *Minyas*, perhaps dealing with Heracles' capture of Orchomenus, the *Danais*, the *Phocais* and others.

Comic Epics

Though they are much later than Homer it will be convenient to mention here the comic epics, one of which, the *Batrachomyomachia*, Battle of the Frogs and Mice, has come down to us. It is a fifth or fourth-century parody on Homer, to whom it was actually ascribed (*Vita Herodotea*, ch. 24). It stands in the same relation to the Homeric poems as Don Quixote does to Medieval Chivalry. Judged by modern standards the parody is not brilliant but it is quite amusing. The dignified politeness of Homeric heroes becomes laughable between a mouse and a frog. The mouse Crumb-snatcher, fleeing from a cat meets the frog-king Puff-jaw:

> *Ψιχάρπαξ μὲν ἐγὼ κικλήσκομαι · εἰμι δὲ κοῦρος*
> *Τρωξάρταο πατρὸς μεγαλήτορος · ἡ δέ νυ μήτηρ*
> *Δειχομύλη, θυγάτηρ Πτερνοτρώκτου βασιλῆος.*
> (27–29.)[46]

The frog takes the mouse on his back across the pond, but seeing a water-snake thoughtlessly dives, leaving the mouse to drown. The mice therefore declare war — the arming of the host is good parody. In Homeric fashion the gods assemble to consider their attitude. Athene refuses to help either side; the mice eat holes in her clothes and the frogs' croaking gives her headaches and keeps her awake at night. Then the poem tails off a little; a horde of crabs and a thunderstorm from Zeus put an end to the war in a single day. There were other comic poems ascribed to Homer, now lost or surviving only in a few fragments. Best known is the *Margites*, probably the work of an Ionian parodist at Colophon[47] about the sixth century B.C. It is written in a mixture of hexameter and iambic lines, thus:

---

[46] "Crumb-snatcher am I called, and I am the son of Bread-nibbler — he was my stout-hearted father — and my mother was Quern-licker, the daughter of Ham-gnawer the king." (Hugh G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, p. 545)

> *ἦλθέ τις εἰς Κολοφῶνα γέρων καὶ θεῖος ἀοιδός,*
> *Μουσάων θεράπων καὶ ἑκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος,*
> *φίλην ἔχων ἐν χερσὶν εὔφθογγον λύραν.*[48]

As early as Plato (*Alcib.*, ii. 147*c*) it was ascribed to Homer. Margites was a kind of village idiot who could only count up to five and could do nothing properly:

> *πόλλ' ἠπίστατο ἔργα, κακῶς δ' ἠπίστατο πάντα.*[49]

Later still are the so-called *Epigrams* of Homer which appear in the *Vita Herodotea.*

Hesiod

The exact time when Hesiod lived is not known. Even among the ancients it was a matter of dispute whether he was earlier or later than Homer. Many regarded the two as contemporaries and there was a story of a poetical contest between them in which Hesiod was adjudged the victor.[50] Herodotus' rough computation that both Homer and Hesiod lievd 400 years before his time would carry us back well into the ninth century and is too early for Hesiod, whose metre and language show him to be slightly later than Homer. But it should be remembered that Hesiod (in the *Works and Days*) is, unlike Homer, describing a contemporary culture and is therefore likely to have a more "modern" appearance. The cultural background of the *Works and Days* is not, like that of the Homeric poems, a mixture covering many centuries. This being so, one expects to be able to use it in determining the date of the poem. But unfortunately the social and economic picture of Bœotia in Hesiod might, for all we know, be true of almost any period. Astronomical calculations, based on observations recorded in the poem, have resulted in a date about 800 B.C., but the data were not really exact measurements. Still, this and other evidence go to show that it is at least likely that Hesiod lived early in the eighth century B.C. For his own life he is himself our main authority. (*Works and Days*, *passim.*) His father, after unsuccessful attempts to supplement his livelihood by trade in Cyme in Asia Minor, abandoned business and came to live in Bœotia in Greece, where he acquired a piece of land at Ascra on Mt. Helicon not far from Thespiæ. On his death his property passed to his two sons, Hesiod and Perses. Immediately Perses, who had spent his time making friends with the ruling aristocracy, seized more than his share and bribed the rulers to ratify his arrangement. After this success, looking enviously at his hard-working brother "adding little to little to make much" he threatened to use his influence with the authorities to extract more out of Hesiod, who, knowing what to expect from the "bribe-devouring princes" wished to settle the matter outside the courts. Whether Hesiod succeeded in preventing the second dispute from coming before the judges we do not know. The whole incident is chiefly important because it gave Hesiod a peg on which to hang his famous *Works and Days*, a didactic poem of some 800 lines addressed to Perses.

---

[47] Hence probably the legend which made Colophon Homer's birthplace.

[48] "There came to Colophon an old man and divine singer, a servant of the Muses and of far-shooting Apollo. In his dear hands he held a sweet-toned lyre." (Hugh G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, p. 537)

[49] "He knew many things but knew all badly." (*Ibid.*, p. 537)

[50] The *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, as we have it, is a late compilation, but parts of it go back to about 400 B.C.

The "Works and Days"

The outstanding fact about Hesiod is that he is the earliest figure in the history of western literature and thought who is more than a mere name to us. Furthermore he is the first man in the history of our civilization to think earnestly about problems of conduct and to embody these thoughts in a literary form. This is not to say that all his thoughts were necessarily original or even that the form he gave them was always his own. Certain parts of the *Works and Days* give the impression of being taken from a stock of proverbial philosophy such as is always current among country people. And if Hesiod considered them to contain useful advice there was no literary etiquette to stop him from using them. It is possible too that other hands may have added fresh proverbs after the poet's death. But Hesiod's was not merely a proverbial philosophy, and it is not on either of the two sets of useful sayings contained in the *Works and Days* that his claim to be a thinker rests. The poem is pervaded with a respect for honest work and absolute fairness such as was unknown in Homeric times and even in his own day must have seemed to many impossible and Utopian.

The way of life which is the main theme of the *Works and Days* may be summed up in the advice "Work hard and do right." Hard work is merely the chief of many forms of right action, so the teaching resolves itself into "Do what is right," which is what every ethical philosopher has sought to expound ever since. What is significant is that for the first time in Greek history we find a man who judged deeds by their rightness and not their strength, brilliance or cleverness. There is a quality of moral earnestness in Hesiod which is reminiscent more of Hebrew prophets than of anything in Greek literature. And Hesiod's denunciation of wrongdoing strikes a note that is rare in Greek literature. For a preacher to condemn vice is easy; but for a philosopher to show what is right and what is wrong is a very different matter. Here it is that Hesiod betrays both the weakness and the strength of his position. His weakness lies in the fact that ethics was a new science and he knew nothing about it; he could not prove anything nor saw need for proof. He was, as we should say, totally unscientific. On the other hand he was saved from the vague generalizations of the average moralist. He intended that his advice should be followed, not discussed, and he therefore made it severely practical. There was no need for premisses and conclusions when the teaching was set forth in the form "Do this" or "Thou shalt not do that." Further, like many amateur moralists and earnest preachers, Hesiod did not distinguish between moral and non-moral. Everything man does must be either right or wrong and if it is right it must be done at the right time. If you wish to obtain sufficient wealth — and it is assumed that you do — you must act justly and work hard. Just as acting justly is demonstrated by a series of examples and precepts without which Hesiod knew his advice would be disregarded or not understood, so in the matter of work it was useless to tell many people, especially Perses, to work hard if they did not know how and when work was to be done. Hesiod's long description of a year's work on a farm is not an interpolation or a separate poem but a very important part of his teaching and which for him was just as much part of morality as the rest. Besides, for most people in this world the problem how to live at all comes before the problem how to live aright.

Hesiod's morality starts from the supposition that to attain wealth is the proper activity of man. This was at least honest and free from cant about sharing the burden of the world's food supply. Each man cultivated his land for the use and benefit of himself and his family, and in this belief Hesiod did not differ from his contemporaries. When every man was for himself rivalry was inevitable and indeed advantageous since it was a spur to greater activities. This is the good Ἔρις (strife) or open competition which Hesiod tells us (11–41) is to be carefully distinguished from the bad Ἔρις which is quarrelsomeness and disputes at law, which the wise worker will eschew at all costs. It only puts money in the pockets of the bribe-devouring princes. And they are fools as well as knaves, for they do not know how much better is a simple and honest life, by how much the half is greater than the whole, as the old proverb puts it. This leads to a long digression (42–201) in which Hesiod tries to answer the now familiar questions: Why is life so hard? If the gods made it, did they make it like this? Was it always as bad as this? Is it due to some great blunder in the past? What kind of life did our early ancestors live? Were they any better or happier than we? Hesiod may have put these questions to himself, or some of his neighbours, among whom he had a reputation for wisdom, may have set him thinking. For us the result is the earliest attempt in the history of European thought to deal with the problems of existence, of our past, and of evil. It is not to be expected that Hesiod's philosophy should answer such questions in a manner which has any scientific value. It has, however, a very great interest. Myth, tradition, history and speculation all help to provide the answer. In the first place life is hard because the gods have made it so. This was the result of the well-known feud between Zeus and Prometheus at Mekone. Zeus hid the means of life under the ground. He also hid fire which Prometheus stole and so benefited man. Zeus in wrath sent a host of other evils, using the feminine beauty of Pandora as a means of spreading them abroad. But mankind was not always in this present sorry state. He once lived (in the time of Kronos) on an equal footing with the gods; that was the golden age. That happy race of men was succeeded by another of mean intelligence and premature old age. Zeus, now ruling in Kronos' place, destroyed these men of the silver age because they paid him insufficient honour, and created the warlike bronze race who had bronze tools and armour, bronze-covered walls, but did not know iron. The transition from myth to history is so skilful and so unconscious that we at first hardly realize that Hesiod is giving us a piece of true tradition about the Mycenæan age. If the whole thing had been merely a piece of oriental or other theorizing about World Ages, the fourth age by sequence of metals would have been that of iron, but again Hesiod knows some history. The age of heroes, those who fought at Troy or Thebes, must be included. They come after the bronze age and before the iron age in which it is our misfortune to live and which is going from bad to worse and is in danger of perishing utterly.

Hesiod returns (213) to his teaching of morality. The great pair of opposites is *δίκη* and *ὕβρις*. Righteousness and wickedness are better translations than justice and violence. Their biblical flavour is not unsuitable. Wickedness may prosper for a time with a strong man though never with a weak. But righteousness shall triumph in the end. If *δίκη* is violated and abused, retribution shall follow on the guilty but the land and people of the righteous shall flourish and have peace, no more war or famine or going to sea. Flocks will be rich and crops good and children like parents. But those that delight in evil deeds Zeus the son of Kronos shall punish, even whole cities for the wickedness of one man. They shall perish by plague or famine, war, siege or drowning. Hesiod now applies this doctrine directly first to the princes (248) and then to Perses (274) and the farmer generally. As if in answer to an obvious criticism of his doctrine that princes decree justice by devine right and need not be afraid of Zeus, he tells them that the ruler of the gods has a host of invisible watchers on earth who report misdeeds to Dike the daughter of Zeus who sits by his throne and tells him all. And so the *people* suffer for the wickedness of their rulers. It is noteworthy that this bitter complaint occurs again. Therefore the princes must be mindful of this and give just judgment for "He that deviseth evil for another, deviseth evil for himself and evil counsel is most evil for him that gave the counsel." Zeus sees everything and wickedness shall not go unpunished. Therefore be righteous, unless indeed Zeus were to say with Satan: "Evil, be thou my good." Perses too must seek righteousness and avoid violence. Men are not like beasts, fish or fowls of the air among whom is no *δίκη*. Besides only the just man shall prosper. Wickedness may seem the easier course but it is not the best. If you cannot see this for yourself, at least believe one who knows it from experience. Only the utter fool neither understands himself nor hearkens to those that do. And you, Perses, will find that there is only one way to avoid hunger and poverty and that is hard work. The gods hate a lazy man. Work is no reproach, idleness is. And the idle will envy you when they see you gradually becoming more wealthy. And wealthy you must become to have an honourable and respectable position. A man without wealth is a poor-spirited sort of man with no confidence or self-respect. At the same time wealth must be obtained justly, not by violence or deceit, or it will be short-lived. Easy come, easy go.

All is now ready for the all-important account of how work is to be done, how wealth is to be got. But in the poem as we have it the long description of the Farmer's Year does not follow at once but fifty-six lines farther on. The intervening lines are in no way irrelevant since they further develop the theme of righteous and unrighteous action by the usual method of giving examples: Thou shalt not commit adultery or ill-treat the fatherless or revile thy parents. Remember to sacrifice to the gods night and morning. Little wonder that some have imagined Hesiod to have been acquainted with the Old Testament. The Farmer's Year (383–617) is the most famous part of the poem, and deservedly so, but it should not be forgotten that its teaching was just as much moral as what has preceded. To work properly meant doing the right thing at the right time. To determine the right time the farmer must carefully observe the signs of nature and the motions of the stars, especially their first visible appearance in the morning just before sunrise and their first visible setting in the morning. Evening observations were less important. Hesiod begins with the rise of the Pleiades in May. For some forty days (in Greece) they have been invisible altogether, then one morning they rise early enough to be seen just before dawn; this is the sign of the harvest season. Towards the end of October sunrise finds them going below the horizon and this setting is the sign for ploughing and sowing. The same season is also indicated by the migration of the cranes which fly south over Greece in October. It is risky to put off ploughing and sowing till the "turning of the sun" (winter solstice) as some do. Orion's rising in July is the signal for threshing. Other signs are the cry of the cuckoo, the bloom of the artichoke-flower and the humming of the cicada. In addition to the operations of farming Hesiod also tells us how to make different instruments, notably the plough and the waggon (423–439). Rarely does he dwell long on descriptions, but the rigours of a Bœotian winter rouse him to give a magnificent picture:

> Many a lofty oak and many a stout pine in the mountain glens Boreas falls upon and bows them down to the bounteous earth; then all the unnumbered trees moan aloud and wild beasts shudder and put their tails between their legs, beasts whose hide is covered with hair. But even through these for all their shaggy breasts he blows icily. Even through the hide of an ox he goes and it stops him not, and through the thin-haired goat; but not through the sheep, for their fleece is thick, not through them does the might of Boreas blow. . . . Then too the beasts of the forest, horned and hornless alike flee through the wooded paths. . . . Then are men like the three-legged one,[51] whose back is bent and his head looks at the ground, like such an one they go to and fro avoiding the white snow. In that season put on protection for your body as I tell you, a fleecy coat and a long shirt. Twist a heavy weft with a single warp and put it on, that your hair may not be quivering or stand on end all over your body. About your feet too fasten close-fitting shoes of the hide of an ox violently slain, having lined them thickly with felt. (From ll. 509–542.)

When his summary of the year's work on a farm is ended, Hesiod turns to sea-faring, uncertain and dangerous work, not to be compared with farming and only to be undertaken at certain favourable seasons:

> In Spring too men may sail; as soon as ever you see the leaves on the top of a fig-tree as large as the footprint of a crow, then the sea is navigable. (678–681.)

To do the right thing at the right time is Hesiod's all-important principle, not only in work but in everything:

> In the vigour of youth bring home your wife, when

---

[51] *i.e.* an old man with a stick.

> not far short of thirty, nor far over; this is the right age for marriage. Let your wife be four years grown up and let her marry in the fifth. Marry a maiden that you may teach her good ways. (695–698.)

This leads naturally to more advice on the conduct of life, care in money-matters, dealings with neighbours and we have more proverbial philosophy like 327–382. Much of the advice is superstitious, especially the concluding section of the poem which deals with the days of the month, or rather moon, which are lucky and which are not.

"Theogony"

For the student of literature the *Theogony* cannot compare in interest with the *Works and Days*. Except for a brief allusion to himself near the beginning of the poem the author's personality does not emerge. In this the *Theogony* is like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In fact it comes close to the Epic tradition. The *Works and Days* is much farther removed from it. That poem was a brilliant innovation, using epic metre and language combined with practical philosophy to make a new kind of literature. The *Theogony* has much less novelty and originality.[52] Its subject matter is very ancient, a history of the gods from the beginning of the world. The material that lay to hand, stories and genealogies of gods and goddesses, was uninviting enough and the poem is not inspiring reading. But it was not intended to delight. For the Muses, Hesiod says: "Know how to tell many falsehoods that are like to the truth, but know too how to speak true things when they will" (*Theog.*, 27–28). The "charm of all the Muses" was not Hesiod's object. The stern realities of life and lessons on how to live it were the subject of the *Works and Days*. The generations of the gods and lessons in sacred history are the theme of the *Theogony*. In a long prelude Hesiod first describes the

---

[52] But a longer subsequent history as a literary form. The cosmological speculations of the *Theogony* are the precursors of similar speculations both in verse and prose of Ionian philosophers. See Part III., p. 169.

Muses and invokes their authority, then addresses them in a hymn[53] which concludes with a prayer for their help in telling

> how first the gods and the world began, the rivers and the boundless surging sea, the shining stars and the wide heaven above and then those born of them, the gods givers of good, how they divided wealth and shared honours and how first they came to dwell in many-hilled Olympus. (108–113.)

At line 116 begins the genealogy; first was Chaos then Earth and Love. Love had to exist before the generation of gods could begin, so thoroughly anthropomorphic were they. Only Earth bore Sky, Mountains, Nymphs and Sea without the aid of Love. Then a union of Earth and Sky produced the Titans, of whom Kronos the father of Zeus was the youngest. (The hundred-handed trio who helped Zeus were a later brood.) We need not follow the details of that ancient barbaric tale of primitive origin — the revolt of Kronos and his mother against the father, then the evil children of night, Death, Doom and Fate, those of the sea, the later Titans, the long digression on Hecate,[54] until finally Zeus is born and in spite of Kronos' gruesome precautions murdered his father and after much fighting against the other Titans succeeded to the kingdom of gods and men (735). A description of Tartarus follows and several descriptions of Styx.[55] At 881 the last opponent Typhoeus has been defeated and Zeus is firmly established on Olympus. His family and the other Olympian gods are now described. In lines 963–965 Hesiod bids farewell to the Muses and there can hardly be any doubt that the *Theogony* proper ends here. At 965 there is a fresh invocation of the Muses, who are asked to sing now of the genealogy of heroes, half divine and half human. This "heroogony" ends at 1020 and just when the Muses are being asked to help in a fresh theme — mortal women — the poem as we have it suddenly stops.

---

[53] Lines 35–103 like the Hecate hymn (see below) have been considered as interpolated, being out of all proportion to the space devoted to the other gods and making the procemium far too long.

[54] Hecate was much worshipped in Bœotia and was perhaps a favourite goddess of Hesiod. But the length of the digression and the fact that it is in the form of a hymn, praising the goddess like the Homeric hymns, have caused ll. 411–452 to be considered an interpolation. There is nothing specifically Orphic about the hymn and we cannot suspect Orphic interpolation. In fact there is nothing to suggest who could have interpolated it or why. She is praised as giver of prosperity at sea and on the farm and in war, and Zeus honours her greatly. For a full discussion see P. Mazon in his *Hésiode* (Budé Series), 21–24.

[55] These seem out of place. Styx was treated earlier (383 ff.) and Zeus' opponents are not yet all disposed of. Possibly the whole of 736–819 is a series of additions.

Hesiodea

As with Homer so with Hesiod, many other poems, most of them lost, were ascribed to him. It would seem that Hesiod's work gave rise to a host of imitations. The heroogony which we found at the end of the *Theogony* proper may well be a case in point. At the end of it there was evidently going to be a "catalogue of women" and there was known a work called by that name and ascribed to Hesiod. The same poem or, according to Suidas, parts of it, were called *Eoiai* because each woman was introduced with the words *ἧ οἵη* "or like her who." Now there is extant a poem of 480 lines beginning with these very words. The woman is Alcmene, mother of Heracles, and the poem is called the *Shield of Heracles*. After telling of the birth of Heracles to Zeus and Alcmene the author proceeds to his fight with Cycnus, but nearly half the poem (lines 122–320) is taken up with the description of his shield; hence the name of the poem. But it can hardly be called a poem at all. The first fifty-six lines are probably from the *Catalogue of Women* (whose author may have been Hesiod); the rest according to Aristophanes of Byzantium is the work of a minstrel who saw in the mention of the birth of Heracles a chance to work in an imitation of the Shield of Achilles in *Iliad*, xviii. This (the *Shield*) is the only work of the Hesiodic school that has come down to us. The commentators on Homer and others have preserved numerous fragments of the *Catalogue* and longer fragments on papyri have been identified as parts of the *Catalogue of Women* or

Eoiai. The longest of these[56] deals with Helen. We learn how many Homeric heroes wooed her with rich gifts. Even Odysseus[57] was among the wooers, but knowing that he had no chance against the wealth of Menelaus he sent no gifts at all! There are fragments of or allusions to other pseudo-Hesiodic works, the *Marriage of Ceyx*, *Ægimius*, *Melampodia.* Other imitators followed the didactic tradition of the *Works and Days*, to the end of which[58] was once attached the *Ornithomanteia* or *Divination by Birds.* There were also the *Astronomy*, the *Precepts of Chiron* and the *Great Works* which was probably an expansion of the agricultural part of the *Works and Days.*

The Homeric Hymns

Homer, Hesiod and the Homeric Hymns are the three examples on which our knowledge of early hexameter verse depends; but in discussing the hymns at this point a caution must be entered; we are not to regard the whole collection as belonging to one period; many of the hymns are not older than the earliest lyrics that we possess. But even if a strict chronological treatment of Greek literature were possible it is more convenient to deal with all the hymns along with the rest of early epic verse where indeed the best of them belong. As long as the public recitation of heroic verse continued it was natural and inevitable that new poems should be written. We have already seen how Homer and Hesiod found imitators. In the *Hymns* we have a new *genre* in literature which owes something to both of these but more to Homer than to Hesiod. The names of the poets[59] of the

---

[56] Rzach Fr. 94 and 96. Evelyn-White (Loeb), 68.

[57] Odysseus' wiliness had a meanness in later legend and in drama which is absent in the *Odyssey.*

[58] Whence it was ejected by the poet Apollonius Rhodius. The mention of bird-omens in the last line of the *W. and D.* made a convenient peg to hang it on.

[59] The scholiast on Pindar, *Nem.*, ii. I, mentions a certain Chian rhapsode named Cynæthus as author of the Hymn to Apollo and gives his date as 69th Olympiad (*c.* 504 B.C.). If Cynæthus was really the author, the date given is much too late. At least the remark shows that the scholiast

Hymns are lost — a kind of indirect index of their antiquity — and their works were ascribed to Homer, whose language and phrases they freely used. Our collection consists of thirty-three pieces.[60] Some have only a few lines but the four major hymns *Demeter*, *Apollo*, *Hermes* and *Aphrodite* average some 500 lines. Behind this contrast lies a curious piece of literary history. Thucydides (iii. 104) says that Homer speaks of the festival at Delos "in the following verses which are ἐκ προοιμίου Ἀπόλλωνος" and then proceeds to quote from the Hymn to Apollo. The meaning of this phrase may be seen from Pindar (*Nem.*, ii. *init.*) who says that reciters of Homer usually begin Διὸς ἐκ προοιμίου "*starting from* a Zeus-prelude." So Thucydides' words mean (the verses) "that start with Apollo." The poem itself is not strictly a προοίμιον and Thucydides does not call it that.[61] It does not form a prelude to a piece of recitation, it is a complete piece in itself. But some of the shorter hymns, *Pan*, the third *Dionysus*, *Hestia* and the shorter *Hermes* are perhaps mere preludes or introductions of the god.[62] Thus it would seem that some rhapsodes, instead of using the prelude to a god to introduce a recitation from Homer, seized upon the idea of expanding the prelude so as to form the whole recitation. The result was the Homeric Hymn. We do not know when this collection of hymns was made. A few of the minor hymns are later than 500 B.C., and some perhaps Alexandrian. But in either case they may have been added after the collection was first made. The bulk of the collection probably belongs to the eighth and seventh centuries. Nothing certain can be inferred from the fact that in our medieval MSS. the *Hymns* sometimes appear along with the Homeric poems,

---

knew that Homer was not the author. Moreover, the Alexandrian scholars did not include the *Hymns* in the works of Homer. Before their time, *e.g.* in Thucydides, the word Homer was loosely used to denote anything "Homeric."

[60] Thirty-four if we include a Hellenistic fragment in Diodorus (iii. 66, 3).

[61] To translate "from the prelude to Apollo" is to ignore the parallel in Pindar.

[62] προοίμιον was a term in lyric poetry also. Pindar, *Pyth.*, i. 4 speaks of ἀγησίχορα προοίμια.

sometimes with later hymn-writers such as Callimachus.

The Hymn to Demeter (ii.) [63] is one of the most beautiful. Its theme, the rape of Persephone by Hades and the sorrows of her mother Demeter, is one of universal appeal not only for the pathos of the story, but for its embodiment in myth of the annual death and resurrection of the Corn, and the light thrown on the mysteries of Eleusis before the introduction of Dionysiac and Orphic elements. When Persephone, playing in the fields with her companions, the daughters of Ocean, bent down to pluck a large and perfect narcissus, the earth opened and the god of many names, Pluto, Hades, Aidoneus, Polydegmon, appeared with his chariot and carried her off. Her mother Demeter had heard her cries.

> Bitter pain seized her heart and she rent the covering upon her divine hair with her dear hands. . . . Then for nine days [64] queenly Deo wandered over the earth with flaming torches in her hands so grieved that she never tasted ambrosia and the sweet draught of nectar, nor sprinkled her body with water.[65]

She inquires of Hecate but the Moon had seen nothing; it took place by day. But Helios the Sun told her and tried to console her by saying that Pluto was a fitting husband for her daughter. Demeter goes on her way sorrowing and comes to Eleusis. There as she sat by a well came four maidens. To their questions she replies with a story that she is an escaped captive woman, a nurse. They brought her to their parents, Celeus, ruler of Eleusis, and Metaneira. In their house she sat on a lowly seat and for a long time would not speak, smile or eat. Finally she accepted *κυκεών*, a mixture of meal and water. (She took it *ὁσίης ἕνεκεν* "for sanctity's sake" and it was commemorated in her sacred mysteries.) She stays in the palace and nurses their youngest child Demophoon, rears him like a god, anoints him with ambrosia and in order to make him immortal plunges him in the fire. The mother, Metaneira, discovers this and is alarmed. Demeter is angry at her lack of faith, reveals her divine identity and departs. Celeus, as he had been commanded, builds a great temple for Demeter but she is still unappeased and causes a famine. Zeus vainly tries to move her.

---

[63] Only one MS. has preserved it and the fragment to Dionysus which precedes it. Our other MSS. begin with Apollo. The numbering is that of Allen and Sikes.

[64] A nine days' fast and perhaps going over fields with torches were part of the ceremonies of the Eleusinian mysteries. The fast was broken by eating *κυκεών*.

[65] Lines 40–50. Trans. H. G. Evelyn-White. Loeb Library.

> For she vowed that she would never set foot on fragrant Olympus nor let fruit spring out of the ground, until she beheld with her eyes her own fair-faced daughter. (331–333.) [66]

Zeus therefore bids his brother Pluto let Persephone return and he consents.

> When he said this, wise Persephone was filled with joy and hastily sprang up for gladness. But he on his part secretly gave her sweet pomegranate seed to eat, taking care for himself that she might not remain continually with grave, dark-robed Demeter.[66] (370–374.)

This eating of food in the underworld bound her to it for ever. When mother and daughter were reunited Demeter feared the worst.

> If you have tasted food, you must go back again beneath the secret places of the earth, there to dwell a third part of the seasons every year. (397–398.) [66]

So it had to be that for a third of the year the Corn-maiden lies beneath the earth. Demeter made the crops to grow again in Eleusis and showed the people her mysteries, "awful mysteries which no one may in any way transgress or pry into or utter, for deep awe of the gods checks the voice."

Of the date and authorship of this fine poem it is impossible to speak with certainty. The poet's interest in Eleusis and the mysteries suggest that he was himself an initiate, and a native of Eleusis. But it is possible that he may have been an initiate without being an

---

[66] Tr. Evelyn-White.

Eleusinian. We know nothing of the regulations in early times, and it would be not a little remarkable that Eleusis should have produced this nameless poet. Yet it is not impossible. The poem might be as old as the eighth century when Eleusis was far in advance of Athens. At any rate it is almost certain that the poem was written before the political union of Athens and Eleusis, for there is no mention of Athens or of the procession of Iacchus (Dionysus) from Athens to Eleusis, which was an important part of the mysteries after the time of the Persian Wars.[67] The date of the absorption of Eleusis by Athens is unknown but it must have been the last stage of the Attic synœcism and probably before the time of Solon. This would point rather to the seventh century than the eighth.[68]

The Hymn to Apollo (iii.) falls into two parts, the first to Apollo of Delos, the other to Apollo of Pytho. Originally there may have been two separate hymns, the first ending about line 180 (in a total of 546), but antiquity seems to have known only one. The following analysis of the poem will show the position: I will sing of Apollo famed for archery. Zeus is his father and honours him with a draught of nectar in a golden goblet. Leto is his mother; in Delos she bare him. When she was with child, no other city or island, not even Chios, fairest of the isles, would receive her, but only Delos, rocky and unfruitful. Leto promised to make it rich, not indeed with herds and crops, but with offerings brought from all over the world to the temple of Phœbus Apollo, if only they would receive his birth. The people were afraid that the great god would scorn their tiny barren island but Leto sware an oath that he should always honour them and with Eilithyia's help Apollo is born. Many temples has he now but he loves Delos best. The Delian maidens delight in praising him. If a stranger ask the maidens who is their favourite poet, let them say "He is a blind man, who dwells in rugged Chios." As for me, says the poet, I will praise you maidens everywhere and far-shooting Apollo (178). Thou rulest over Lycia, Mæonia, Miletus but chiefly Delos (181). The son of Leto goes to Pytho playing upon the lyre; in his playing all the gods delight. How shall I sing of Apollo? He wandered from place to place seeking where he might establish an oracle. Finally he came to Crisa by Parnassus where he slew a dragon guarding a spring.[69] Its body rotted (*πύθω*) in the sun and so the place was called *Πυθώ*. He brought Cretans from Cnossos city of Minos, guiding their ship in the form of a dolphin round the Peloponnese and up the Crisæan gulf. On landing at Crisa he disappeared only to return again to welcome the strangers. They are to call him Apollo Delphinius, since he came to them first in the form of a dolphin. So they followed him inland to Pytho (Delphi) and became ministers of his new temple. It would appear from this that the writer of the first part, though himself a Chian, was keenly interested in Delos. The island receives nearly as much praise as Apollo himself, whose prowess with the bow is more in evidence than his skill with the lyre. The change to the story of Apollo's wanderings (182) is very abrupt and in all that follows Delos is of no account and is not mentioned even in conclusion. There is nothing actually inconsistent with the Delian part, it is just totally different in outlook. The author of the Pythian part knows or cares nothing for the islands of the Aegean, his Apollo is located on the mainland and his interests are in the Peloponnese and Delphi, to say nothing of dragons and etymology. It is, however, by no means certain that we ought to divide the hymn as it now stands. It is quite likely that the Delian hymn ended at 178, but what follows is not a complete hymn. Lines 179–181 look like a link with which the author of the Pythian fastened his longer story on to the older hymn. The Delian part, written by the Chian rhapsode[70] for the festival of Apollo at

---

[67] Herodotus, viii. 65.

[68] The question is at present insoluble. This hymn has been used as a *terminus post quem* for the fusion of Athens and Eleusis (*Cambridge Ancient History*, iii. 580) so it is of little use to use the fusion to date the hymn.

---

[69] For brevity's sake the incident of Telphusa and the Typhaon digression are passed over.

[70] See above, note 59.

Delos, is probably the most ancient in the collection — early in the eighth century. The Pythian need not be *much* later.[71] The oracle, afterwards so famous, gets practically no mention. The author was a poet of the mainland, perhaps a seventh-century follower of the Hesiodic school.

Very different is the *Hymn to Hermes.* This god had many functions and attributes. He was patron of thieves. In the *Iliad* (xxiv. 24) he is asked by the gods to steal Hector's body. Trickery and deception were useful qualities much to be feared and envied, and the god who embodied them was sure to be powerful. Moreover, he was the god's chief messenger and himself the god of luck. Some of his attributes he shared with Apollo. Both were pastoral gods and lovers of music. Hence Apollo plays an important part in this hymn, which concludes with an amicable arrangement between the two gods of their privileges. Hermes was the son of Zeus by Maia.

> She bore a son, of many shifts, full of cunning, thief, cattle-lifter, bringer of dreams, watching by night, lurking by the gates, who was soon to show off his wonderful deeds among the immortal gods. Born at dawn, by noon-day he was playing on the lyre, in the evening he stole the oxen of far-shooting Apollo.
> (13–18.)

The exploits of this sturdy infant are among the most amusing things in literature. He discovers a tortoise, the first "piece of luck" (*ἕρμαιον*); with it he made the first lyre and played and sang. That same evening he left his cradle and went on his first thieving expedition. He drove off fifty of Apollo's cattle, making them walk backwards so that their footsteps should appear to be entering the field. Himself he shod with great mats made of wicker and leaves. After slaying two oxen and eating of them he slips back to his cradle

---

[71] Certainly not later than 578, when chariot races on the Crisæan plain were introduced into the newly reorganized Pythian games. Apollo in the hymn (262–271) has no connection with or love for chariots.

> wrapping the clothes round his shoulders like an infant child, his hands playing with the sheet about his legs he lay, clutching his beloved lyre under his left arm. (151–153.)

Next day a battle of wits ensues between Hermes and Apollo, ending in their appearance before Zeus, the child still lying brazenly and denying everything. But his sweet and tuneful lyre so enchants Phœbus that he is willing to take it in exchange for his cattle. But Hermes is not yet satisfied or rather the poet seems to think the god of luck ought to know something of prophecy, the special domain of Delphic Apollo. So Phœbus, while refusing to surrender any of his prerogatives, allows Hermes to study a kind of private divination with the sisters Thriæ. Such a story cannot fail to be humorous, especially when the child tucks himself up in his cradle and pretends to be asleep (240–243) or when he misbehaves himself as infants will (296), yet it would be a mistake to regard this hymn as a burlesque. Its humour is not that of parody or satire, it is inseparable from the story, which is as much a genuine tribute to the power of Hermes as the next hymn to the power of Aphrodite. Its date and place of composition are uncertain. Hermes' lyre has seven strings. Tradition said that the seven-stringed lyre (in place of four) was introduced by Terpander, who was an old man in 676 B.C. If this is true,[72] the hymn would then belong at the earliest to the seventh century. It has been suggested that the author was a Bœotian,[73] but there is nothing definitely to attach the poem to the Hesiodic school.

The fourth of the major hymns (Aphrodite) is shorter than the other three (293 lines). It is marked by an intensity of feeling appropriate in a hymn to the powerful goddess "who stirs up sweet desire in the gods, overwhelms the generations of mortal men, winged birds and all animals, whether of the earth or of the sea. . . . But three hearts she cannot convince or delude" (Athene, Artemis and Hestia) (2–7). The bulk of the hymn is devoted to a single episode — her union with the mortal Anchises, father of Æneas. Aphrodite is ashamed of what she has done and will not make Anchises immortal as Dawn had made Tithonus, to his everlasting sorrow. The language of this beautiful hymn more closely resembles that of Homer than the others. Verses and half-verses are taken from him. This does not prove that Homer was the author or even that it is particularly ancient; only that the poet was a conscious and skilful imitator, so well steeped in Homer that his lines and phrases came readily to his lips. There are also reminiscences of Hesiod and of the *Hymn to Demeter*. In the latter case it is impossible to say which was the borrower.

---

[72] But it is probably false: the seven-stringed lyre was known in the late Minoan Age.

[73] "The part played by Onchestus, which does not appear in the other versions, is . . . striking; the mention of this place seems motiveless, except on a supposition of Bœotian influence." — Allen and Sikes.

Of the remaining hymns mention must be made of *Ares* (viii.), not for its intrinsic merit but because of its Orphic character. It is disputed whether it is a genuinely early piece of Orphic literature (see Pt. III.) or a work of the third or fourth century A.D. In any case its presence in the collection is strange and its seventeen lines quite different in spirit from the other hymns. Nor should *Pan* (xix.) be neglected. Pan, though an ancient figure in folk-lore, had but little honour in orthodox religion, or in literature or art before the fifth century (see Herod., vi. 105–106), to which this hymn very likely belongs. It is a happy little poem showing a love of woods, glens and streams which is less common in Greek than in English literature.

PART TWO

Elegiac, Iambic and Lyric Poetry

All the poetry which was considered in Part I. was written in hexameter verse. It found its most perfect form in Ionia in the works of Homer and long remained a kind of standard method of expressing and recording facts (see Pt. III.). It is in Ionia too that we first meet with elegiac, iambic and lyric (or melic) verse. The musical accompaniment to epic had long since degenerated into a mere strumming on the lyre or been abandoned altogether, but while hexameter verse had gone ahead by itself and left music behind, other forms of verse, if they existed,[1] had remained subordinate to it. Now about the eighth century B.C. there was a great revival in Greek music and connected with it a great development of those forms of verse which depended on music. Of these the iambic, like the hexameter, soon parted company with music, the elegiac clung longer to it, but lyric poetry, as its name implies, remained closely wedded to the lyre, whether the verse was intended for solo- or for chorus-singing. This musical revival was apparently largely due to Lydian and Phrygian influence. A certain Olympus, whose favourite instrument was the *αὐλός*, is said to have composed pieces of music (*νόμοι*) chiefly of a religious kind. Compositions might be for the flute (*νόμοι αὐλητικοί*) or for the lyre (*κιθαριστήριοι*), but in either case they might have a verbal accompaniment (*νόμοι αὐλῳδικοί, κιθαρῳδικοί*). The chief musical instruments were the seven-stringed lyre (*φόρμιγξ, λύρα, κίθαρις*) and a wind instrument *αὐλός* commonly translated "flute" but more resembling a clarinet or a reed-blown pipe.[2]

---

[1] The Greeks themselves believed that elegiac, iambic and lyric poetry were all invented about 800 B.C. — an inference from the fact that no examples are known earlier than the seventh century. But Homer uses certain words which denote types of lyric (pæan, dirge) and alludes to a marriage-song and a hyporcheme; so unless we suppose that all these were composed in hexameters, we cannot be sure that other kinds of metre did not exist in his time. See Part I, note 4.

[2] But in Pan's Pipes or *σῦριγξ*, a series of reeds of different length bound together, the sound was obtained by blowing across the holes as in our flute.

Two *αὐλοὶ* were often played simultaneously by the same person. The lyre in its simplest form was a tortoise-shell with a number of sheep-guts of different length stretched across a frame on its inner side. Representations of both these instruments have been found in late Minoan civilization and both are well known to Homer. The music produced by them was in a sense[3] very simple; it was a melody which though it did not necessarily follow the sung melody exactly,[4] *i.e.* was not always in strict unison, was not what we should call an accompaniment or counterpoint. The Greek *ἁρμονία* did not mean harmony in that sense. Now the classical Greek language, like modern Swedish and Chinese, had a certain melody even as spoken, that is to say, every vowel had pitch as well as sound and often the meaning of the word depended on the correct pitch.[5] This pitch was denoted[6] by marks, which we somewhat unfortunately call accents. The sung melody must have been influenced by this spoken melody and at least have avoided running counter to it. Still more important than the connection of words and melody is the connection, amounting almost to identity, of metre and rhythm. As long as verse was written only to be sung its metre was the same as the rhythm of the music. This is particularly important for the study of lyric verse, which was always sung. There was no such thing as a lyric poem pure and simple. Hence though we are in ignorance of the *melodies* to which lyric was sung, this identity of metre and rhythm will help us to understand the *form* of the music and in turn to follow the metre of the verse. It is useless to try and divide a complicated lyric into feet as if it were a piece for recitation. When the verse was sung the audience did not hear a succession of feet, they heard the phrases of the music[7] and the phrases of the words[8] coinciding. This rhythmical phrasing of a poem and its music was almost part of its meaning, for the Greeks were very much alive to the effects of rhythm. For example, without any words at all the most characteristic phrases of the class of rhythm which they called Dorian, ⏓| – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏓ and – ⏑ – ⏓ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ –, seemed to them full of masculine energy and courage. The Phrygian type seemed more frenzied and exciting, the Lydian soft and enervating and so on. Each rhythm tended to produce a certain effect on the hearer and it was quite possible to combine the types in a single poem according to the effect desired at a given moment.

---

[3] Actually it was very complicated owing to the great variety of fractional tones.

[4] At any rate in later times (third century B.C.) for a hymn to Apollo inscribed with music on stone at Delphi gives one series of notes for the words, another for the instrument.

[5] *e.g. δῆμος* people, *δημός* fat. Cp. Swedish *gìftet* the marriage, *gíftet* the poison.

[6] First in Alexandrian times.

What the causes were which led to these remarkable developments it is nearly impossible to say. The revival in music had no small effect on literature, at any rate so far as lyric proper is concerned, and lyric in turn played an important part in drama. But while we must not underrate the importance of music merely because we are so ignorant of it, it would be a mistake to suppose that it actually caused the new developments in metre and form. The contact of Ionian Greeks with Lydia and Phrygia and through them with other oriental influences was productive of much fruit. If Lydia and Phrygia brought music, the Hellenes brought their incomparable language, and it was the combination and interaction of these that was the important factor in the development of elegiac, iambic and lyric poetry. Another cause is to be found in the historical and political situation of the time. The seventh century was a period of turmoil and dissatisfaction, in which verse, music and dance combined to express the religious, political and personal feelings of the individual. The deep resentment of Archilochus found better expression in iambics and elegiacs than in the happy march of the hexameter; only personal experience could have produced the love songs of Sappho or the warlike verse of Tyrtæus; and politics, almost unknown in Homer but foreshadowed in Hesiod, were the very essence of living both to the moderate Solon and the hot-headed Theognis.

---

[7] There was no regular division into bars.

[8] Not of course in the grammatical sense; the phrase might end in the middle of a word.

Elegiac Poetry

Our knowledge of the elegiac couplet dates only from about the seventh century B.C. It consists of an ordinary hexameter line followed by a line of 2½ + 2½ feet, each being the beginning of a hexameter line with a strong cæsura in the third foot. This is presumably the way in which the metre arose; the close dependence of elegy on epic in metre and language allow of no other conclusion; but the date of the invention of the couplet may well be much earlier than the seventh century (see p. 89, note). Moreover, the phrase of 2½ feet was used by Archilochus alternating with iambic lines, so possibly this phrase may have had an earlier and independent existence. The complete second line of the couplet was called a pentameter (*πεντάμετρον*); it was also called *ἐλεγεῖον*,[9] as being the feature which distinguished elegiac from epic verse. *ἐλεγεῖον* is of course derived from *ἔλεγος* but the derivation of the latter word is unknown. The Greeks derived it from *ἒ λέγειν* to cry *Ah* or *Alas*. The etymology is far from convincing, but at least the earliest meaning of *ἔλεγος* was dirge or lament, the kind of song which Homer called *θρῆνος*. On the other hand the earliest poems in elegiac verse are not dirges but warlike songs. It seems therefore that we do not possess any examples of the original *ἔλεγος* which gave its name to the metre — an additional indication that it was older than the seventh century. The metre was especially associated with aulos-music of which the Phrygians were the chief exponents, hence modern etymologists have suggested that *ἔλεγος* may be a Phrygian word cognate with the Armenian *elêgn*, flute; but unless we know the date when the Greeks borrowed the supposed Phrygian word and whether that word meant flute, not dirge or something else, such etymologies give no help. We know no more than the ancients [10] who first thought of the elegiac couplet, still less whether he actually had flute-music in mind and was trying to adapt the hexameter to that instrument, but we do know that the language of elegy very closely resembles that of epic. In its hexameter line Homeric verse endings occur and the dactylic character of the whole was carefully preserved in the second half of the pentameter. On the other hand the change in metre may have been actually responsible for some linguistic changes. Thus where Homer used *ἰδέσθαι*, the elegists, and later Greek generally, used *ἰδεῖν*. Mimnermus (14.2) ends a pentameter with *οἵ μιν ἴδον*. *ἴδοντο* would have given a hexameter ending. So too in Tyrtæus, 10.26. Early Greek elegiacs have not the artificial monotony of the Ovidian couplet; there is free use of *enjambement*, carrying on the sense from one couplet to the next.

---

[9] It also means an elegiac couplet. *ἡ ἐλεγεία*, a poem in elegiacs.

Callinus of Ephesus

Our earliest elegiac poet is Callinus of Ephesus. About 657 B.C. the coast-lands of Asia Minor were invaded by Cimmerians and we have an elegiac poem (Fr. 1) by Callinus in which he calls upon the young men to defend their country and not to spend their time drinking as if peace would last for ever. To die for one's country is a glorious death, and death inevitably comes even to those who claim descent from the gods. A man may shut himself up at home but such a man has no honour among the people and when he dies they do not miss him as they do a warrior, who while he lives is like a tower of strength in their eyes.

Tyrtaeus

Warlike elegies were also written by Tyrtæus, probably about the same time (late seventh century) but we do not know for certain to what city he belonged.[11] There was a story as old as Plato (*Laws*, i. 629*a*) that the Spartans during the second Messenian War (*c.* 630 B.C.) acting on the advice of the Delphic oracle asked Athens for help, and the Athenians sent a lame schoolmaster [12] called Tyrtæus who so inspired the Spartans with his martial poetry that they won the war and afterwards followed his advice in organizing their government and education. If there is any truth behind the story, it is that Tyrtæus was not a Spartan born but came there from some other city, for Sparta in these days was no foe of the arts.[13] From what we know of early seventh-century Athens one is inclined to doubt whether he could have come from there and to suggest that he came from Ionia. If this is so, during his residence at Sparta he dropped certain Ionisms, such as κότε for πότε, used by Callinus and Mimnermus, but generally his language so closely follows epic that it gives no clue to his nationality. An anapæstic marching song in Doric is almost certainly not by Tyrtæus.

---

[10] Quis tamen exiguos elegos emiserit auctor
Grammatici certant et adhuc sub iudice lis est.
HORACE, *Ars Poetica*, 77–78.

[11] Aphidna in Attica and another place of the same name in Laconia were both assigned to him.

The surviving fragments are partly warlike and partly political. The latter are from the political poem *Eunomia* which is said to have assisted the Spartans in their government (Fr. 2–4 Bergk). Of the warlike elegies there is a fine fragment on a papyrus of third century B.C. (Edmonds Fr. 1) and another preserved by the Athenian orator Lycurgus (*In Leocratem*, 107, see p. 367) which is similar to Callinus Fr. 1 but superior to it in imaginative vividness:

> And your elder comrades, whose knees are no longer supple, desert them not in flight. For it is a disgrace for an old man to fall in the forefront with younger men behind him, to lie there, with hoary head and beard gray, breathing out his mighty strength in the dust, grasping in his own hands his gory parts and flesh stripped bare — a shameful sight and horrible

---

[12] This detail is due to Pausanias. According to some versions Tyrtæus was made a general of the Spartans.

[13] See p. 122.

to behold. But for the young all such things are meet.
(Fr. 10 Bergk, 7 Diehl, 19–27.) [14]

In another fragment (12 Bgk., 9 Diehl) he expresses his contempt for any man, however strong, handsome, eloquent or well born, if he be not an eager warrior.

Of the *Eunomia* very little has survived. The constitution of Sparta is thus sketched by the oracle of Apollo. "There shall rule over the Council kings honoured of the gods and the lovely city of Sparta shall be all their care, then men of elder years, next men of the people who shall also in their turn abide by these just covenants" (Fr. 3 Diehl). A much mutilated papyrus fragment [15] dating from the third century B.C. may also be from the *Eunomia*. It contains a reference to the threefold division of the Spartans into tribes but little else is really intelligible.

Mimnermus of Colophon

In the latter half of the seventh century B.C. the Greek cities of Asia Minor, notably Smyrna and Colophon, had fallen under the dominion of the kings of Lydia and there was no place for the patriotic fervour of Callinus. The poet Mimnermus seems to have found no good anywhere but in the joys of love and wine which the brevity of our youth calls upon us to enjoy while we may. When Horace (*Epist.*, i. 6.65) says:

> Si, Mimnermus uti censet, sine amore iocisque
> Nil est iucundum, vivas in amore iocisque,

he had evidently in mind:

> *τίς δὲ βίος, τί δὲ τερπνὸν ἄτερ χρυσῆς Ἀφροδίτης;*
> *τεθναίην ὅτε μοι μηκέτι ταῦτα μέλοι,*
> *κρυπταδίη φιλότης καὶ μείλιχα δῶρα καὶ εὐνή,*

---

[14] T. Bergk, *Poetæ Lyrici Græci*, 4th edition. E. Diehl, *Anthologia Lyrica Græca*. In the Loeb Library there are *Elegy and Iambus*, 2 vols., ed. J. M. Edmonds, and, for lyric proper, *Lyra Græca* in 3 vols.

[15] Powell, *New Chapters in Greek Literature*, 3rd series, p. 62.

οἷ’ ἥβης ἄνθεα γίγνεται ἀρπαλέα
ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξίν· (Fr. 1.1–5.)[16]

The second and fifth fragments are similar in tone but the eighth, which like the fifth is from a poem called *Nanno*, strikes a different note and describes the ceaseless journeyings of the sun. It would be a mistake to suppose that Mimnermus was nothing but a hedonist. Stobæus on Courage quotes a fine passage (Fr. 14 Bgk.) in which Mimnermus looks back to the courageous days before the Lydian dominion.

Solon of Athens

Although Athens played a more important part in Classical Greek Literature than any other city, yet before the time of Pisistratus, to whom some credit is due for Athens' subsequent pre-eminence, she produced only one writer of note and he was more famed as a lawgiver than as a poet. Solon, however, was not one of those politicians for whom literature is a refuge from affairs of state. His elegies, and his iambics,[17] are largely the expression of his political creed and designed to defend it and educate the people in accordance with it. His poems would be learned by heart and sung or recited. He was born in Athens of noble family, at what date it is not certain. He lived long enough to see what he most feared come to pass — the establishment of a tyranny at Athens (*c.* 560 B.C.) and was by that time an old man. If he died at the age of eighty, as Diogenes Laertius says,[18] he must have been born about 640 B.C. He was chosen by the warring parties at Athens to reform the constitution in 594. Before that time little is known of his life except the part he played in winning Salamis for Athens from

---

[16] "But what life would there be, what joy, without golden Aphrodite? May I die when I be no more concerned with secret love and suasive gifts and the bed, such things as are the very flowers of youth, pleasant alike to man and woman." (J. M. Edmonds, ed. *Elegy and Iambus*, Vol. 1, p. 89)

[17] Especially Fr. 36 and 37 Bergk.

[18] But this may be only an inference from Fr. 19 where he expresses a wish to die at eighty.

Megara. He travelled much, mostly after he had established his new constitution and had left the Athenians to work it for themselves. Our authorities for his life (chiefly Plutarch and Diogenes) agree that he visited Egypt, Cyprus and Lydia at least, but not about the details of his journeyings.

Fragment 1 is the piece which is said to have inspired the Athenians to renew their efforts to take Salamis. It begins: "I am my own messenger come from lovely Salamis; instead of a speech I have made me a song, an adornment of words." The significant fact is that he discovered what he could do by using a poem instead of a speech. He continued to use this method. He was naturally influenced by his great predecessor, Hesiod, whose appeals for righteous dealing and avoidance of wanton violence he often recalls. If the city come to ruin it is not the fault of the gods but of the people and their rulers who are greedy and corrupt and do not mark the holy ordinances of Justice:

> All this my heart bids me tell the Athenians. How Disorder causes most distress to a city, but Good Order makes all things perfect and shapely and many times puts fetters on the unrighteous. She makes the rough places smooth, checks excess [19] and puts an end to overbearing insolence,[19] and withers up the sprouting blooms of retribution;[19] she makes straight crooked judgments and the deeds of the proud to be of no effect. (Fr. 4.31–37.)

Now while there is much here and elsewhere that is Hesiodic, there are new conceptions, especially the contrast between *δυσνομία* and *εὐνομία* which is, politically speaking, a step in advance of the *ὕβρις-δίκη* conflict. *Eunomia* was the title of the political poem of Tyrtæus which helped the Spartans form their constitution. It is the good order that prevails in a city blessed with good rulers. Nowhere yet had the oligarchic or aristocratic ideal of *εὐνομία* given way to the democratic *ἰσονομία.* As Solon himself says in defence of his constitution:

---

[19] On the words *κόρος, ὕβρις, ἄτη,* see p. 139.

> To the people I gave as much privilege as is good for them, neither adding nor taking away anything. Those that had power and were respected for their wealth for them too I took care, that they should not suffer anything unseemly. I stood holding a great shield before both classes and would not allow either to take an unjust advantage (Fr. 5.1–6).

— a very fair summary of the intentions of Solon's timocratic constitution. Space forbids more than a reference to the seventy-six line fragment (No. 13 Bgk., 1 Diehl) beginning "Glorious children of Memory and Olympian Zeus, Muses of Pieria, hear me as I pray," which is not only a good account of Solon's philosophy but his finest poem.

Theognis of Megara

Nearly 1400 lines of elegiac verse have come down to us under the name of Theognis. No other elegiac or iambic poetry has survived in such bulk or been transmitted through medieval manuscripts at all.[20] All the others are only known through papyrus fragments or citations in later writers and anthologists. Yet this book has raised more problems than it has solved — problems which can only be briefly indicated here. The chief problem is how much is the work of Theognis himself and how much is not. Even if this could be satisfactorily answered, there would still remain the question: What is this book and how did it come into being and when? Is it an anthology, perhaps a series of anthologies of elegiac verse in general, or is it an anthology selected from Theognis with the addition of other poems? We know that Plato (*Laws*, i. 630*a*, *Meno*, 95) knew and quoted a book of poems attributed to Theognis and that Isocrates (*To Nicocles*, § 43) classed Theognis along with Hesiod and Phocylides[21] as a didactic poet. Much of the Theognidea is didactic but hardly ll. 1231 to end (= Bk. ii).[22] At any rate our book whether it be the same as Plato's or not contains a good deal of Theognis' own work. It also contains elegies not by him but by Mimnermus, Solon and others. Even after excluding these and confining ourselves, perhaps wrongly, to Book i. (ll. 1–1230) we are still left with a good deal which editors have labelled non-Theognidean on various grounds; but the criteria employed to distinguish the true from the false are capable of producing diverse results and their use adds little to our certain knowledge of literary history. With the exception therefore of a few pieces, such as 903–930, which are generally rejected,[23] it is not unreasonable to accept provisionally whatever parts of Book i. cannot definitely be ascribed to any other poet as the work of Theognis.

---

[20] The same is true of Pindar among Melic Poets.

[21] A purveyor of proverbial sayings for which like Hesiod he used hexameters. He probably lived about 600 B.C. Some of his sayings survive but a didactic poem of 230 lines, which in late antiquity passed for his, is a Hellenistic-Jewish forgery.

Theognis was a citizen of Megara Nisæa; Plato speaks of him as a citizen of the Sicilian Megara which he presumably became when he was banished from his home city. Plato's words cannot be pressed to mean that he was born in Sicily. For the date at which he lived we are dependent on indications afforded by the poems, especially the references to the Persians (764 and 773–782). Now in 546 B.C. Crœsus, the last of the Lydian kings, was defeated by Cyrus, founder of the Medo-Persian Empire. His lieutenant Harpagus had no difficulty in following up this success by annexing the disunited Greek cities in Asia, who made vain appeals to Sparta for help. These disasters must have had a terrifying effect on the Greeks of the mainland and given rise to fears that they themselves would be the next victims of this new power. As it happened Cyrus turned his attention to Babylon which he took in 538 B.C., but there can be no doubt that the terror while it lasted was a real one, quite real enough for Theognis to pray to Apollo to

---

[22] The division may be due to a desire to separate the more pæderastic element. Book ii. survives only in one MS.

[23] On linguistic grounds. Lines 1209–10 and 1211–16 announce their authorship in terms which seem to show that they are not by Theognis, but opinions differ.

"keep off the insolent host of the Medes from this city" (775). Thus the poet must have "flourished" about 550–540 B.C.[24]

Many of the passages that make up the book are addressed to Cyrnus the poet's close friend. There is an important passage (19–38) which as it were sets a seal on the work and declares its purpose:

> Let me set my seal, for I am a poet of understanding,[25] Cyrnus, upon [26] these lines, and they shall never be stolen undetected, nor shall any ever make a change for the worse from the good that is in them, but every man shall say "These are the lines of Theognis of Megara, famous among all men," though indeed I have not yet been able to please all my fellow-citizens. . . . But for thine own sake Cyrnus, I will give thee the counsels which I learned from good men in my own childhood.

What exactly is meant by the "seal" is obscure. It may be the address to Cyrnus,[27] then only the Cyrnus' passages are genuine, but such a "seal" would have been easy to forge. If Theognis meant to provide a test for genuineness, we have not been able to use it. The above passage also refers to his banishment from Megara. The political upheaval which led to it is not known but it must have been in the nature of a victory for the democrats at the expense of the aristocracy. Theognis' own political bias stands out frequently. He was an aristocrat, one of the *ἀγαθοί*, the common people are *κακοί* (43–46). Things are not as they used to be, people show no respect for their betters (57–59).

---

[24] This agrees with the opinion of the Greeks themselves who were however probably using these same data. Some (*e.g.* E. Harrison, *Studies in Theognis*) have seen in 764 and 775 a reference to a more imminent Persian danger — that of the Marathon campaign in 490. Others, relying on 894, where an unmetrical reading is plausibly emended to *Κυψελιδέων*, and which then becomes a prayer for the destruction of the Corinthian tyrants, have dated Theognis before 581 when the last of the Cypselids fell.

[25] *σοφιζομένῳ* like Pindar's use of *σοφός*, "skilled in poetry."

[26] Or perhaps "by means of these verses."

[27] Jacoby; or it may be the words "these are the lines of Theognis." — Harrison, Pohlenz.

For the sake of money men of good family wed their daughters to the low-born; we select mates for our livestock with more care (183–192). He marvels that Zeus can allow the wicked to prosper (373 ff.). Sometimes in exile he longs for his own land (783–788). As promised in line 27 there is abundance of moral advice for Cyrnus, *e.g.* 145–148, 171–172. The passage 401–406 begins:

> *μηδὲν ἄγαν σπεύδειν · καιρὸς δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἄριστος.*[28]

The didactic element is evident enough and the book was used for the moral instruction of the young. There is some sound advice about drinking (837–844), but in another passage (877–884), written we may suppose in another mood, we read:

> Enjoy your time, my soul! another race
> Will shortly fill the world and take your place,
> With their own hopes and fears, sorrow and mirth:
> I shall be dust the while and crumbled earth.
> But think not of it! Drink the racy wine
> Of rich Taygetus, pressed from the vine
> Which Theotimus in the sunny glen
> (Old Theotimus loved by gods and men)
> Planted and watered from a plenteous source,
> Teaching the wayward stream a better course:
> Drink it and cheer your heart and banish care:
> A *load* of wine will *lighten* your despair.[29]

The bitterness of his resentment against his political opponents may be illustrated by 345–350:

> No chance of revenge can I find against those who have violently robbed me of my goods. . . . May it be theirs to drink black blood; may some good god take note and bring this to pass according to my desire.

Of the remaining elegists Archilochus will be more appropriately dealt with under the Iambic poets. Anacreon and Simonides among the lyric, while Xenophanes is best deferred to Part III. The elegiac couplet continued to be used for pithy sayings and short pieces, *e.g.* by Euenus of Paros, probably the author of "Theognis," 472–496, etc., by Critias, one of the Thirty Tyrants at Athens in 404. Antimachus of Colophon, who was ranked very high both as an epic and an elegiac poet, wrote a lament for his beloved Lyde, in which he consoled himself by describing similar cases of bereavement in mythology. He was admired for his learning in Alexandrian times. (See further, Part III.)

---

[28] "Be not over-eager in any matter; due measure's best." (J. M. Edmonds, ed. *Elegy and Iambus*, Vol. 1, p. 277.)

[29] Translated, or rather, loosely paraphrased by J. H. Frere (1862).

Iambic Poetry

Our knowledge of iambic like that of elegiac verse goes back only to the seventh century B.C. It too answered the needs of the age in a way impossible for the old-fashioned hexameter, which had catered for the tastes of a now fast-decaying nobility. The seeds of democracy were springing up; discontent had ripened into revolt and found expression in a kind of verse closely akin to popular folk-poetry. Of all Greek metres the iambic (and equally so the trochaic) is, as Aristotle says (*Poet.*, iv. 1449*a*), *μέτρον λεκτικώτατον*, the metre nearest to speech. But while it is rhythmically far removed from the hexameter, its language like that of all Greek poetry is much indebted to Homer so far as difference in metre will allow. At the same time its dialect is not Epic, nor on the other hand is it the Ionic of Herodotus. Ionic it certainly is, but not the ordinary spoken tongue. Though less conventionalized than the language of Epic, the language of Iambic is the result of a conscious artistic effort. Naturally its vocabulary and diction changed in the course of time and varied according to the uses to which it was put and the poets who used it. The iambics of the dramatists differ more from those of Archilochus than the hexameters of the post-Homeric poets from those of Homer. In the hands of Aristophanes, while preserving much of the original satirical character, they more nearly approximate to the language of prose.

The foot *iambus* consists of a short followed by a long syllable (⏑ –) but the proper division of an iambic line is into pairs of feet. Thus a line of six iambi is called an iambic trimeter, not a hexameter. Similarly an eight-foot line is a tetrameter, and a four-foot a dimeter. Closely allied with the iambic metres are the trochaic, in which the dipody is – ⏑ – ⏑ instead of ⏑ – ⏑ –. The two measures were combined in various ways and Archilochus also combines dactyls with iambi. The origin of the word ἴαμβος is as obscure as that of ἔλεγος. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter tells how, when the goddess sat in the house of the Eleusinian king, mourning the loss of her daughter, the first person to make her smile was Iambe, a serving-maid who was therefore honoured in the celebration of the Mysteries. From this it may be inferred that iambic verse was especially associated (1) with the worship of Demeter, (2) with light amusing verse. Both these inferences are substantially true. With the advent of Dionysus to the Mysteries the association was extended to his worship also and it is possible that the use in drama of iambic and trochaic metres was due to or facilitated by this connection. The other fact has led to the suggestion that ἴαμβος is connected with ἴαπτω to throw, but the formation is unparalleled and the semantic connection far-fetched. No satisfactory etymology has been found, but the appearance of the word (cf. θρίαμβος, διθύραμβος) suggests a non-Greek origin. At all events the story of Iambe is evidently a reflection of the mocking character of early iambics. While our earliest examples of ἔλεγος were not dirges, our earliest iambics are certainly satire. This, of course, does not prove that there was no iambic verse before Archilochus; the probability is that there was. The variety and complexity of the Archilochan metres presuppose some kind of predecessors. Archilochus stands in the same relation to Iambic as Homer to Epic poetry and we have the same difficulty in estimating the extent of his debt. So far as our knowledge goes, pre-Archilochan iambic verse was probably confined to popular folk-songs of a simple kind. Yet all the chief forms of trochaic and iambic metres (except the scazon, see Hipponax) appear in the early stages of iambic. All this shows that there must have been a great deal of innovation and invention on the part of Archilochus, who accordingly deserves his reputation as being the father of Iambic as Homer was of Epic verse.

Archilochus of Paros

Archilochus was born in Paros, an island in the Aegean Sea made of a solid block of marble. He lived also in the island of Thasos, whither a certain Telesicles, father or great-grandfather of the poet, had gone from Paros to found a colony. The colonists had a difficult time owing to attacks by Thracians from the mainland and more than once, it would seem, the family of the founder returned to the mother-city Paros. Cicero (*Tusc. Disp.*, i. 3) says that Archilochus lived *regnante Romulo*, but this vague indication is too early. For he himself mentions (Fr. 25)[30] the Lydian king Gyges who died in 652 and who according to Herodotus (i. 12) was contemporary with Archilochus. Herodotus may have been merely drawing an inference from the poem, but there is another indication: in Fr. 74 he alludes to an eclipse of the sun, probably that of 5 April 648 B.C., about which date we may put his *floruit.*

The scanty surviving fragments of Archilochus bear out what Dio Chrysostom said (*Or.*, 33, II): "Homer generally glorified everything. . . . Archilochus went to the other extreme and found fault, because, I suppose, he saw that people deserved it more and found fault first with him." His bitter personal attacks enable us to know something of the man and his life. He seems to have left Paros as a young man and to have spent some years in Thasos fighting the Thracians. On one occasion, he tells us in an elegiac poem (Fr. 6), he threw away his shield and refused to fight any more — an incident which stuck in the memory of succeeding generations, some censuring him, some like Horace (*Odes*, ii. 7, 10) claiming to have followed his example. Plutarch tells us that when Archilochus came to Sparta, the citizens expelled him; in Spartan eyes a man who had thrown away his shield (ῥίψασπις) was a kind of dangerous heretic. At some period of his life, probably after his first fighting in Thasos, he met a certain Neobule, younger daughter of Lycambes, a Parian noble. They became engaged but Lycambes, discovering that Archilochus, though his father was noble, was born out of wedlock of a slave mother, refused to keep his promise and encouraged the suit of another. Archilochus in his fierce iambics attacks father, daughter and rival, sometimes covertly by means of fables of folk-poetry but more often openly and even coarsely. For the story that these lampoons drove Neobule to hang herself, Horace (*Epist.*, i. 19, 30) is our earliest authority. Some said that Lycambes also hanged himself. At all events it was this affair that occasioned some of Archilochus' bitterest satire of which, however, but little survives. Later in life he seems to have made an unhappy marriage with a courtesan. So much may be inferred from the long but much mutilated fragment in an inscription on a monument to Archilochus.[31]

---

[30] Bergk, Fr. 22 Diehl.

Of his poems those dealing with the war in Thasos are, as we should expect, in elegiacs. In the rest there is a great variety of iambic and trochaic measures, notably the iambic trimeter and the trochaic tetrameter catalectic.[32] If he did not invent, he certainly perfected the epode,[33] a couplet of an iambic trimeter followed by an iambic dimeter, a metre imitated by Horace in his *Epodes*, which he calls his Iambics. But while we know a little about the man and the nature of his writings and of his metrical innovations, it is difficult to form an estimate of him as a poet from our scanty remains. That our loss has been very great is however clear not only from his fame in antiquity but from this poem (Fr. 66 Bergk, 67 Diehl):

---

[31] No. 114 Edmonds (51 Diehl), *Elegy and Iambus*, vol. 2., p. 321.

[32] With the last foot incomplete.

[33] ὁ ἐπῳδός, originally applied to the second verse of the couplet; cp. ἐλεγεῖον, above, note 9, to be distinguished from ἡ ἐπῳδός, that part of a lyric poem which follows the strophe and antistrophe.

Θυμέ, θύμ' ἀμηχάνοισι κήδεσιν κυκώμενε.
ἐνάδεο, δυσμενῶν δ' ἀλέξευ προσβαλὼν ἐναντίον
στέρνου, ἐν δοκοῖσιν ἐχθρῶν πλησίον κατασταθείς
ἀσφαλέως · καὶ μήτε νικῶν ἀμφάδην ἀγάλλεο,
μήτε νικηθεὶς ἐν οἴκῳ καταπεσὼν ὀδύρεο·
ἀλλὰ χαρτοῖσίν τε χαῖρε καὶ κακοῖσιν ἀσχάλα
μὴ λίην · γίγνωσκε δ' οἷος ῥυσμὸς ἀνθρώπους ἔχει.[34]

Of his epodes there are two good examples in papyrus fragments, one of which is an eloquent piece of cursing.[35]

Semonides of Amorgus

By birth a Samian, Semonides left the island in a political upheaval probably about 600 B.C. and founded the colony of Amorgus, which was thenceforth his fatherland. The anthologist Stobæus (fifth century A.D.) has preserved for us more of Semonides than of Archilochus. There is a poem of 118 lines (Fr. 7), a satire on women. Different types are likened to sow, vixen, bitch, she-ass and cat. One is born of a prancing long-maned thoroughbred mare and

To the work of the house not a thought will she give;
She won't touch the millstone, won't lift a sieve,
Nor empty the refuse, nor sit by the stove
For fear of the soot; makes her husband make love.
Twice or three times a day on the bath she is bent
And smears herself over with greasy old scent.
(58–64.)

Another is shifty as the sea; only she that God made like the bee will be a delight to him that marries her. This is a clever and amusing piece but hardly poetry.

---

[34] "Soul, my soul, that art confounded with hopeless troubles, look up and defend thyself against thy enemies, setting a bold front against ambushes and standing nigh unto the foe firm-planted; and exult not openly if thou prevail, nor if thou prevail not lie wailing at home; but rejoice not overmuch in delightful things nor be vexed overmuch in ill, knowing what sort of temper (i.e. temperament) possesseth man." (J. M. Edmonds, ed. *Elegy and Iambus*, Vol. 2, p. 131)

[35] Frr. 79 and 80 Diehl (*Anthologia Lyrica = Supplementum Lyricum*, 1917, Frr. 2 and 3, where see references).

Even his more serious pieces such as Fragment 1, on the general futility of living, lack the fire of Archilochus' personal conviction. This generalizing is more characteristic of elegiac than of iambic poetry and an elegiac poem in Stobæus (iv. 24, 38) is so reminiscent of Semonides in sentiment that it is probably his.[36] At any rate there was a tradition [37] that Semonides in addition to iambics wrote elegiacs including a History of Samos.

Hipponax of Ephesus

The name Ἱππῶναξ, "Lord of Horses," suggests an aristocratic family. When about 542 B.C. a tyranny was set up at Ephesus, Hipponax was banished. He went to Clazomenæ where he sank lower and lower and became an associate of thieves and beggars whose *argot* he employed in writing his scurrilous verses. The obscurity and coarseness of his diction appealed to the Alexandrians who praised him highly. He is credited with the invention (also ascribed to a slightly later iambic poet, Ananius) of the *scazon*, or choliambic metre, used by Catullus. It is an iambic trimeter with a trochee instead of an iambus in the sixth foot, which gives an odd limping (*σκάζων*) effect to the verse, thus:

> *Δύ᾽ ἡμέραι γυναικός εἰσιν ἥδισται,*
> *ὅταν γαμῇ τις κἀκφέρῃ τεθνηκυῖαν.*[38]

This fragment is preserved for us by Stobæus but it is uncertain whether it is rightly attributed to Hipponax. Other short fragments are preserved by Athenæus and the late and rather foolish Tzetzes who, as we know from his references to other poets, misquoted badly or paraphrased from memory. Hipponax often attacks a certain Bupalus, a sculptor, whose mistress he loved; often begs for warm clothing and carpet-slippers for his chilblains (56, 59, 60 Knox, 17–19 Bgk.). Another time he says (29 Bgk.):

---

[36] Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides*, p. 273. The poem was formerly attributed to Simonides of Ceos (Fr. 85 Bergk = Semonides, Fr. 29 Diehl).

[37] In Suidas.

[38] "Two days are the best of a man's wedded life,
The days when he marries and buries his wife."
(C. M. Bowra and T. F. Higham, *The Oxford Book of Greek Verse*, p. 226)

> Never did Wealth, too blind is he,
> Come to the house and say to me
> "Hipponax, here's a hundred pounds."

The extreme coarseness of some of his verse is well exemplified in a papyrus fragment (92 Knox). His venomous and spiteful nature was famous in later antiquity. Leonidas (*Anth. P.*, viii. 408) wrote an epitaph for him, bidding passers-by beware "for even in Hades his fiery words can do damage." Yet in spite of his coarseness and unpleasantness we regret the loss of so much of a poet who greatly influenced both Callimachus and Catullus.

Lyric (Melic) Poetry

It is not surprising that the sturdy, epigrammatic elegiac and the plain, direct iambic verse soon parted company with music. But the rhythm of lyric or melic poetry was so closely wedded to the phrases (μέλη) of the music that each was an integral part of the work and the poet had to be writer, composer and singer. As with elegy and iambus our knowledge does not take us back earlier than the seventh century, but we know that there must have been songs long before that time. The seventh and sixth centuries, however, saw a great expansion of sung poetry and the creation of many different forms of lyric verse. A convenient general classification is into monodic songs for solo-singing and choral songs. The former owed its expansion to the Lesbian school followed by Ionians, the latter, often with processional or dancing accompaniment, chiefly to the Dorians. Lyric poetry was an important element in religion. There was a lyrical ὕμνος as well as the Homeric hymn, in this case more nearly approaching in meaning our word hymn; it was a song to the gods sung to a lyre by a stationary chorus. A προσόδιον was a hymn sung by a chorus in procession. The Pæan (παιάν) was a choral song of praise or thanksgiving, frequently but not necessarily addressed to Apollo. Hyporcheme (ὑπόρχημα) was a general term for a hymn closely connected with dance; such was the dithyramb, a choral song and dance usually addressed to Dionysus. These are all examples of sacred song. The secular lyric included the encomium (ἐγκώμιον *sc.* μέλος) which means a song sung at a feast (ἐν κώμῳ) in praise of the host or the chief guest of the evening. The ἐπινίκιον which Pindar has made famous, is an ode in honour of a victor in the games, σκόλιον a song to be sung by all the company at a feast, ἐρωτικὸν a love song, ἐπιθαλάμιον and hymenæus (ὑμέναιος) marriage-songs, θρῆνος a dirge. Lastly there is the partheneion which was both sacred and secular. It was always choral and confined to Dorian countries. As its name implies it was sung by a chorus of girls. Here may also be mentioned folk-poetry, songs of work and play of which some examples will be found in the *Oxford Book of Greek Verse*, Nos. 124–130.

Lesbian Lyric (Monodic)

While both elegiac and iambic verse came to perfection first among Ionic-speaking Hellenes it is in the Æolic island of Lesbos that we find the beginnings of monodic lyric proper. This large island in the northern Aegean had come greatly under the influence of Lydian music and had become a centre of the worship of Apollo. Skill on the lyre was therefore widely spread and society sufficiently cultured to appreciate new songs and new music. The earliest figure in Lesbian lyric is Terpander (seventh century), a composer of νόμοι κιθαρῳδικοί. He is said to have been invited from Methymna in Lesbos to Sparta where he set up a school of music, and to have been four times a prize-winner at the Pythian games for singing to the lyre. His surviving fragments are few and short but he was an important figure in the history of music. From Methymna too came Arion, who became a kind of court poet to Periander of Corinth (after 625 B.C.). To Arion became attached a folk-tale of miraculous escape from drowning. when a dolphin, enchanted by his music, carried, him ashore (Herod., i. 23). He was famous especially for his dithyrambs and for certain developments of choral lyric which were of importance in tragedy (see below Pt. IV., p. 210). There is a hymn to Poseidon,[39] probably of the fifth or fourth century, which on account of its praise of dolphins was wrongly attributed to Arion. When we speak of Lesbian poets, however, we mean not these two shadowy emigrants but Alcæus and Sappho. Both belonged to Mytilene, chief city of Lesbos, and both used their own Lesbian Æolic dialect. They were contemporaries and mutually acquainted, a pleasant change from the severe isolation which seems to mark other early poets. Of their many poems we possess only scanty remains, just enough to enable us to realize that they created something new and something beautiful in literature. In all other respects they were poles apart.

Alcaeus

Alcæus was born of noble parents in Mytilene in Lesbos probably in the latter half of the seventh century B.C. He took part in a war of Mytilene against the Athenians for the possession of Sigeum in the Troad. Here, like Archilochus, he lost his shield. He tried to make light of it in some verses sent to a friend (Fr. 86 Bergk, Herod., v. 95). At Mytilene as often elsewhere about this time there were violent feuds between the people and the nobles, culminating in the establishment of a tyranny. Alcæus and his brothers had to leave the country; they had taken an active part on the side of the nobles. It is probable that, after the resignation of the law-giver Pittacus, Alcæus was allowed to return. One of his brothers took service under Nebuchadnezzar; on his return Alcæus sent him a kind of encomium (Fr. 33 Bgk., 50 D.) which is so exaggerated that some have thought it must be sarcastic. But Alcæus took very seriously everything connected with war. He might have thrown away his shield, but on paper at least his muse was most warlike. Horace's *Alcæi minaces Camenæ* is true enough. He revels in a long description of all the weapons in an armoury standing ready for the day of need (Fr. 15).[40] There is in fact a deal of braggadocio about Alcæus and he breathed his most ferocious fire against his own countrymen of the opposing party. All-important for him were the delights of high society, feasting and amours; these must be defended at all costs, and they breathe through many graceful fragments of his songs, *e.g.* Fr. 34, 35, 36, 41. He was, as we have seen, a keen politician and many of the fragments are from political poems. That from which the often-quoted line "'Tis men that are the city's tower in war" (Fr. 23 Bgk.) comes has been found on a first-century papyrus which however is so much mutilated that only a word or two of each line remains (Lobel No. 55, Edmonds[41] 41). Alcæus was perhaps the first to use the afterwards frequent comparison of the State to a storm-tossed ship (Fr. 18 Bergk), the poem which Horace had in mind when he wrote *Od.*, i. 14:

---

[39] Diehl, *Anthol. Lyr., Gr.* ii., p. 5.

> I am bewildered before the conflict of these winds. First on one side the billows heave, then on the other; while we between, carried in the black ship are struggling hard with the mighty storm. There is much water in the hold about the mast. Already the sail is torn and there are great rents in it. . . .

This poem is written in the metre called Alcaic which Horace in a slightly different and more rigid form has made familiar. Alcæus was probably the inventor of this measure, but Sappho also used it. So too Alcæus uses the metre associated with the name of Sappho in his hymn to Hermes (Fr. 5) and apparently in the beautiful line addressed to the poetess herself:

'Ιόπλοκ' ἄγνα μελλιχόμειδε Σάπφοι.

Sappho of Lesbos

Legends gathered thick round the first and perhaps still the greatest woman poet. It is tolerably certain however that she lived chiefly at Mytilene in Lesbos. She was said to have been born in Eresus, on the west coast. This may be a case of confusion of names; there was a famous courtesan at Eresus called Sappho; but if it is true that she was born there, the whole family must have migrated to Mytilene, for her brothers' names were borne by Mytileneans long after.[42] The date of her birth must have been towards the end of the seventh century. Among the few certain incidents in her life was a quarrel with one of her younger brothers, Charaxus, a wine-exporter, who in Egypt had come into contact with an Egyptian courtesan Rhodopis or Doricha; he ransomed and eventually married her and thereby enraged his sister. A third-century papyrus (*Ox. Pap.*, i. 7, Edm. 36, Smyth 42, Lobel, p. 2) has preserved parts of a poem in which Sappho appeals to Charaxus to return and be reconciled. At some period in her life she was an exile from Mytilene. Though she took no interest in politics herself, she belonged to the noble class and her exile was probably contemporary with that of Alcæus. There seems to be nothing very definite against the tradition that she visited Sicily,[43] that she was married and had a daughter,[44] but we may dismiss the story made familiar to us by Ovid (?) in a trivial poem [45] and by Grillparzer in a fine play, which connected her with a certain Phaon, an imaginary person of beauty irresistible to women but himself without passion; for love of him Sappho was said to have thrown herself over the "Leucadian Cliff," wherever that may be. Other stories grew up about her, making her out a notorious courtesan, but there is no evidence to support them, certainly not her extant poems. In communities less enlightened than seventh-century Mytilenean society the mere fact of a woman writing love-songs and making them public would have been sufficient to ruin her reputation. So other poets Alcæus, Anacreon, Hipponax and even Archilochus, who must have been dead, were said to be her lovers. Far more interesting and convincing is the story that Solon, hearing one of her songs sung for the first time, insisted on learning it at once lest he should die before he had time to do so. Plato said of her in an epigram:

---

[40] Reff. to Bergk. See also *'Αλκαίου μέλη*, ed. E. Lobel in which this is No. 119.

[41] *Lyra Græca* (Loeb).

---

[42] Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides*, p. 23.

[43] *Contra*, see Wilamowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[44] Fr. 85, but see H. W. Smyth, *Greek Melic Poets*, p. 247.

[45] *Heroides*, xv.

> Some say there are nine muses. So few then?
> Sappho of Lesbos makes their number ten,

and critics ancient and modern have concurred.

In Mytilene she had a kind of school, or rather she led a group of young girls of good birth whom she instructed in music, singing, manners, and all womanly culture. When a pupil left to get married she would often write an epithalamium. We have no complete example of her marriage-songs of which she is said to have composed a large number, but another third-century papyrus from Oxyrhynchus (*Ox. Pap.*, 1232 and 2076) which is in fairly good condition in parts and describes the wedding of Hector and Andromache, may belong to this class. The rest of her poems are mostly love-songs of some kind. Love was the mainspring of her life and her verse, and the only poem preserved in its entirety is, appropriately enough, an appeal to Aphrodite (Fr. 1). It begins thus:

> Immortal Cypris of the marbled throne
> Daughter of Zeus, for all wiles are thine own.
>   Crush not my soul, O Lady Queen,
>   with care and teen;
> But hither come, if thou in days gone by
> Didst ever leave thy father's home on high,
>   Deigning from far my prayers to hear
>   with listening ear.
> And camest in thy golden car, that straight
> Thy dainty sparrows down from Heaven's gate,
>   With quick wings winnowing the air
>   o'er the dark Earth bare.[46]

We owe the survival of this poem to Dionysius of Halicarnassus who adds: "The beauty and charm of this passage lie in the woven tissue of the words and the smoothness of their adjustment. For the words are set side by side and are woven into one piece as by a sort of relationship and natural affinity of the letters" [47] [*i.e.* sounds]. It is needless to add that much of this delicate beauty depends on the language, especially on the music of the Greek vowels, and cannot be reproduced in translation. To reproduce the simplicity and directness of Sappho in English results merely in baldness, while a more expanded rendering fails to give any impression of her peculiar qualities. There is however one of her poems part of which has been translated and adapted by an equally great lyric poet — Catullus. We are fortunate in possessing both the original (Sappho, Fr. 2 Bgk.) and the translation (Catullus 51). The physical effects of passion, nervousness, and embarrassment are depicted with all the poetess's force and economy of expression. The author of the treatise *On the Sublime*, after citing the poem, writes: "She experiences contradictory sensations, at one and the same time she freezes, burns, raves, reasons; so that it is not a single passion that is here set forth but a congress of passions." [48] There is however a certain difficulty in the interpretation, which Catullus' adaptation does not elucidate. The poem is addressed by Sappho (at any rate by a woman, l. 14) to a girl, one of her favourite pupils, but the opening lines speak of a man "who seems to me like a god, sitting there by your side, looking at you (ἐνάντιός τοι) and listening to your sweet voice and lovely laughter." There is however no expression of jealousy in the poem. It would seem that the man has come to take the lovely girl as his bride.[49] Sappho has no word of reproach, only of praise for the intruder, but realizes with a pang that she will miss the beautiful pupil whom she loves so passionately.

---

[46] Tr. C. R. Haines (Routledge, Broadway Translations).

---

[47] *De Comp. Verb.*, ch. 23.

[48] Pseudo-Longinus, *On the Sublime*, x. 3.

[49] Wilamowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 58, seems right in saying that some definite man must be present (*contra* Smyth, *op. cit.*, p. 235). It is likely enough that the poem as cited by Ps.-Longinus is incomplete. Catullus departs from the original after three stanzas.

Her parting with another pupil is described in a fragment of a manuscript of the seventh century A.D. Though less mutilated than most of the newly discovered fragments of Sappho, the text is often very uncertain. But following Wilamowitz's restorations much of it is clear enough. The girl wept bitterly, not wishing to leave. Sappho replied: "Go, farewell and remember me. You know how I have loved you. If you do not, I will remind you. You forget the love and tenderness we enjoyed. Many a wreath of violets and roses . . . you placed upon your head for me. . . ." Such is the barrenness of literal translation. Voltaire's saying "Les traductions augmentent les fautes d'un ouvrage et en gâtent les beautés" is perhaps more true of Sappho than of any other Greek poet save Pindar. We must be ever returning to the original lest we lose sight of her poetry altogether. This little poem, perhaps modelled on a folk-song, will need no translation:

Δέδυκε μὲν ἀ σελάννα
καὶ Πληΐαδες, μέσαι δὲ
νύκτες, παρὰ δ' ἔρχετ' ὤρα,
ἔγω δὲ μόνα κατεύδω. (52 Bgk., 94 Diehl.) [50]

No. 3 (4 D.), though it merely says that stars lose their brightness beside the full moon, says it perfectly:

ἄστερες μὲν ἀμφὶ κάλαν σελάνναν
ἂψ ἀποκρύπτοισι φάεννον εἶδος,
ὄπποτα πλήθοισα μάλιστα λάμπῃ
γᾶν ἐπὶ παῖσαν.[51]

Lastly there are two fragments in hexameters (93 and 94 Bergk) which have been translated by Rossetti thus:

---

[50] "The Moon and Pleiades have set,
Midnight is nigh,
The time is passing, passing, yet
Alone I lie."
(C. R. Haines, *Sappho, the Poems and Fragments,* p. 127)

[51] "Around the fair moon the bright beauty of the stars is lost them when her silver light illumes the world at its fullest." (J. M. Edmonds, ed. *Lyra Græca,* Vol. 1, p. 189)

Like the sweet apple which reddens on the topmost bough.
A-top the topmost twig — which the pluckers forgot somehow —
Forgot it not, nay, but got it not, for none could get it till now.

And:

Like the wild hyacinth flower which on the hills is found
Which the passing feet of shepherds for ever tear and wound
Until the purple blossom is trodden into the ground.

Ionia and the Mainland. Anacreon of Teos

The wide popularity enjoyed by the songs of Alcæus and Sappho in Lesbos soon spread to the Ionic-speaking parts of Asia Minor, where as we have seen elegy and iambus already flourished. Here took place after 600 B.C. further developments in lyric proper. Before that time we hear only of Polymnestus of Colophon, a musician whose compositions were long used in teaching music at Athens. Of literature our knowledge begins with Anacreon of Teos. About 545 B.C., when still probably a young man, he and many other Teans migrated to Abdera in Thrace, perhaps in consequence of the Persian pressure on Ionia. He saw some military service and wrote a fine epigram (Fr. 100 Bergk) on a fellow-soldier slain. He followed the fashion for soldier-poets set by Archilochus of throwing away his shield; his dislike of fighting was genuine enough. "I do not like," he says, "the man who when sitting drinking by a full bowl of wine talks of battles and woeful war" (Fr. 94, D. 96). And again:

ὁ μὲν θέλων μάχεσθαι,
πάρεστι γάρ, μαχέσθω. (92, D. 82.) [52]

At this period of his long life he seems to have written chiefly elegiacs and iambics or trochaics. He fell in love with a wild or shy Thracian girl whom he addresses thus:

---

[52] "He that will fight may fight if he will." (J. M. Edmonds, ed. *Lyra Græca,* Vol. 2, p. 193)

Why with Scorn-reverting Eye,
Pretty Thracian Filley, Why
Me as skill-less and unwise,
Fly you, Cruel! and despise?
    Scorner, could I once attain
O'er thy Neck to throw the Rein,

Swift with raptur'd Speed would I
Urge thee round the Goal of Joy.
    O'er the Daisy-painted Mead,
Lightly bounding now you feed;
'Time some happy Lord ascend,
Skill'd thy stubborn Pride to bend.
    (75 Bgk., 88 D.; tr. Addison 1735.)

Apparently he soon tired of her (Fr. 96). Few poets have praised wine more, yet he disliked the immoderate unmixed drinking of the Thracians, and celebrated his return to polite society by calling for a proper drink of ten parts water to five of wine together with pretty songs (Fr. 63). Another time (42) he asks for a measure of five to three. The slander that called him a sot, drinker of unmixed wine, was no more justifiable of Anacreon than of his imitator Horace.

Between 537 and 522 he was at the court of Polycrates, tyrant of Samos. Here was a society suited to his tastes. His exquisite trifles, songs of love and drinking made him a welcome member of the court circle; and his unfailing good humour and avoidance of politics enabled him to keep his position there. On the death of Polycrates he found a place at the court of the Athenian tyrant Hipparchus, son of Pisistratus. What happened after the murder of Hipparchus in 514 we do not know. The character of the court circle under Hippias was very much changed and he probably left Athens. Tradition had it that he was buried in his native land of Teos eighty-five years after his birth. He was long remembered at Athens, where a statue of him stood on the Acropolis (Pausanias, i. 25. 1), and painters depicted him on vases.[53] It is all the more melancholy to have to record the usual tale of scanty literary remains.

---

[53] Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides*, 103–105.

His songs, like Sappho's, are simple, fresh and free from obscure allusions and, in a very different sphere, almost equally perfect. Grace and lightness abound rather than depth of feeling. Fragment 1 (Bergk) is a prayer to Artemis, Fragment 2 an appeal to Dionysus to protect the poet's favourite Cleomenus. Other loves were Bathyllus and at Athens Critias. Perhaps the prettiest song is the following, which defies translation:

Σφαίρῃ δηὖτέ με πορφυρῇ
βάλλων χρυσοκόμης Ἔρως
νήνι ποικιλοσαμβάλῳ
συμπαίζειν προκαλεῖται
ἡ δ', ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ' εὐκτίτου
Λέσβου, τὴν ἐμὴν κόμην,
λευκὴ γάρ, καταμέμφεται,
πρὸς δ' ἄλλον τινὰ χάσκει.

(Fr. 14 Bgk., 5 D.)[54]

Here it is pleasant to find that the poet much though he regrets his gray hairs (cp. 24, 25) is not embittered by his advancing years. Yet when old age was really upon him he could not escape the typically Greek terror of death:

See, Time has o'er my Temples spread
His hoary Frost, and snow'd my Head.
My Gums untenanted are grown,
And Youth and Joy are long since flown.
The Goal of Death is just before,
And Life's short Race will soon be o'er.
It's this that heaves my Breast with Sighs,
And bids unnumber'd Terrors rise.
For dreadful is that gloomy Cell,

---

[54] "Lo now! golden-haired Love hits me with his purple ball and calls me forth to play with a motley-slippered maid; but no, she hails from grand Lesbos, and so she finds fault with my hair because it is white, and goes gaping after another." (J. M. Edmonds, ed. *Lyra Græca*, Vol. 2, pp. 145, 147)

Where pensive Ghosts with Pluto dwell,
And then the dark Descent's so deep,
That none can re-ascend the Steep.
(Fr. 43; tr. Addison.)

Rarely is he moved to indignation, but the ostentation and effeminacy of a wealthy upstart Artemon cause him to forsake his accustomed mildness of temper (Fr. 21).

Anacreon's language is Ionic with many Homeric words and epithets. In metre he did not closely copy his Lesbian predecessors but, starting generally from an iambic basis, invented measures suitable for singing to the lyre and for his light themes of love and wine. The popularity of his songs gave rise to a host of imitators in Hellenistic and Byzantine times and a collection was formed of a few genuine and many spurious pieces which was long considered to be all the work of Anacreon. It is to this collection and not to the genuine fragments that the immense popularity of Anacreon in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is due. The result has been greatly to exaggerate the erotic side of Anacreon's work and to make him out far more of a mere elegant trifler than he really was.

In Greece itself too various forms of lyric poetry flourished in the sixth century and doubtless long before. Athenæus (xv. 694*c*–695*f*) has preserved twenty-four Attic drinking-songs (skolia). In metre and even in diction these show the influence of the Lesbian school but strangely enough little or nothing Anacreontic. They seem to have been meant for a wider public than Anacreon's verse. They often contain veiled political allusions to Pisistratids or Alcmæonids. It should be remembered that a skolion was not necessarily an invitation to drink or an eulogy of wine but a part of the ceremony of drinking which it was churlish to omit. "Shall we then not say or sing something to our cup, but simply drink, like thirsty men?" (Plato, *Symp.*, 214*b*). In Bœotia in the sixth century we hear of two poetesses, Myrtis and Corinna. The Bœotian lyrists unlike the Lesbian and Ionian made use of mythology and of the genealogical verse of the Hesiodic school with which they were naturally familiar.

To Corinna of Tanagra her fellow-countrymen gave the name Μυῖα "the fly," intending it as a compliment and a counterpart to Sappho's name the Bee. The desire to bring her into connection with the glory of Bœotia — Pindar — gave rise to stories that she was his teacher, or his friend and critic, or his rival. If she was a rival of Pindar — and she was said to have defeated him in contest five times — she did not approve of other poetesses competing against him:

> I for my part have fault to find with Myrtis, sweetly though she sings, for that being a woman she competed with Pindar. (Fr. 21, D. 15.)

It was Corinna too who was said to have given Pindar advice on the use of myths in poetry — to sow with the hand and not with the whole bag. She wrote in hexameters sometimes and made songs both for solo and chorus.[55] Her few fragments show the same directness and simplicity as Sappho but without her universal appeal. She was the poetess of her own locality who loved her native land, wrote in its homely dialect[56] and told its ancient myths and stories:

> I come to sing the glorious old tales for the long-robed maidens of Tanagra. Greatly my own city enjoys my gay and tuneful songs. (Fr. 20, D. 2.)

She was neglected by the Alexandrian critics who did not include her in their canon of lyric poets.[57] But a Berlin papyrus shows that she had readers in Egypt in the second century A.D.[58] It contains portions of three poems of which one is a piece about a contest between two mythical singers Helicon and Cithæron in which, by the vote of the gods announced by Hermes, Cithæron is declared the victor. Another is a narrative poem in six-line stanzas dealing with the nine daughters of Asopus. A few well-preserved lines may be cited

---

[55] Cp. Fr. 20 cited below = Diehl 2.

[56] Yet her language is not purely local. There is Epic influence to which all Greek poetry was subject. Still the fragments of Corinna are the only example of literary Bœotian.

[57] Viz. Alcman, Alcæus, Sappho, Stesichorus, Ibycus, Anacreon, Simonides, Bacchylides, Pindar.

[58] See C. M. Bowra in Powell, *New Chapters in Greek Literature*, 3rd series, p. 21 f.; and Diehl, *Anthol.*, p. 479.

οὕτω γὰρ Ἔρως
κὴ Κούπρις πιθέταν, τιὼς
ἐν δόμως βάντας κρουφάδαν
κώρας ἐννί' ἑλέσθη.[59]

Choral Lyric

We pass now to Choral Lyric,[60] thus returning once again to the seventh-century beginnings. However delightful the simple monodic songs, we must not forget that for the Greeks themselves the choral lyric in its various forms was far more important. The feelings and opinions of individuals might make a theme for a love-song or verses to be sung at a party but the choral lyric could express the feelings of the whole nation, that is the whole city. The society which thronged the market-place and temples of a Greek city-state was small and compact, and it is difficult for us to realize how important a part in the nation's life was played by ceremonies and festivals with their music, their dance and their song. Nor were these religious only. Whether religious or secular or both, they were part of the recreation and amusement of the people. There was thus a constant demand for the choral lyric and this in turn led to more changes and a more vigorous and complex development than in the monodic lyric. One has only to compare first Alcman with Pindar, then Alcæus with Anacreon, to see how much greater in choral lyric are the changes in form, metre and content than was possible in the narrow field of monodic. This is well exemplified too in language. The songs of Sappho, Anacreon and Corinna are all written in the local dialect of the poet. In choral lyric this is true only of the earliest writers such as Alcman. The Doric origin of the choral ode coloured the language of all subsequent choral poets, but it was not the ordinary spoken Doric. It would be a mistake to imagine that Greek poets could write any dialect of their language at will. A clever mimic like Aristophanes might write a part for a Bœotian farmer in one of his plays, but no Athenian could write the language of Corinna any more than a Londoner the dialect of Moira O'Neill. When therefore we speak of the Doric of the choral odes in tragedy we mean something entirely different from the native speech of Laconia. The language of the fully developed choral ode, though far less conventionalized than that of Epic, is still a dialect only in the literary sense. The Doric of Alcman played but a small part in its make-up and the language of Epic itself was an important element especially after Stesichorus.

---

[59] "For so did Eros and Cypris persuade them (the gods) to enter your halls in secret and take the nine maidens."

[60] It should be remembered that the division of *poets* into choral and monodic is not to be any more rigidly applied than that of elegiac and iambic. Sappho and Corinna certainly composed some songs for choral performance, while Simonides of Ceos was famed for his elegies.

Alcman of Sparta

As we have already seen in dealing with Tyrtæus and Terpander, seventh-century Sparta had none of that disregard for literature which marred it in later times. Though lacking in poets themselves the Spartans of that time encouraged artists of other lands to come and settle there. Alcman like Tyrtæus seems to have been one of these. That he came from Sardis would be certain[61] if we could be sure that he is addressing himself in "Never were you a rough and illiterate fellow even in the eyes of poets, no Thessalian or Erysichæan or shepherd but from glorious Sardis" (Fr. 24 Bergk), and the tradition was strong that he did come from Sardis. He was, however, a Greek not a Lydian, and became thoroughly acclimatized in his new home, where he composed verses and music and trained choruses of both sexes. He can hardly have been the first choral poet and trainer; before him the Cretan Thaletas (*c.* 700 B.C.?) had done much to improve choral music at Sparta, as did Terpander in monodic, and had composed pæans and hyporchemes: but Alcman, who flourished about 640 B.C., is the earliest choral poet whose works we know. Alcman was a master of rhythm and metre and from the earliest times the metres of choral lyric followed a different line of development from that of the monodic. The Lesbian school early established stanzas of a fixed form, which could be repeated as often as desired and employed in any poem at will. The choral lyric never stereotyped its rhythms in this way. Each poem was a new rhythmical creation; once the metrical scheme of the initial strophe[62] was composed, it could, like the shorter monodic stanza, be repeated continually in the same poem, but there its life ended, and each new poem had its new initial strophe. It was here that Alcman showed, if not creative genius, at any rate great technical skill and originality.

---

[61] The matter however was in dispute among Alexandrian scholars, some of whom regarded his dialect as evidence of Spartan birth, not merely of long residence there.

Alcman's shorter fragments are difficult to classify. Some are apparently from love-poems or drinking-songs, but his greatest work was choral. He was especially successful with his *partheneia*, songs for a chorus of maidens. These were much in demand at Sparta, where the education and recreation of young girls was not neglected, as it was in Attica. Our longest fragment of a partheneion (about 100 lines, Fr. 23 Bgk., 1 D.) is a first-century papyrus discovered in 1855. Part is lost and parts mutilated but it is clear that it consisted of ten strophes of fourteen lines. The loss of most of the first two strophes makes it difficult to be sure what the occasion of the poem was. It may have been in honour of Artemis Orthia[63] (l. 61). A regular feature of the choral ode was the myth, which had not necessarily any very close connection with the god or man celebrated, but often served to make a comparison or draw a moral. Here the myth is that of the sons of Hippocoön, who fought against the Dioscuri and were punished for their rebellious insolence. But the partheneion was not a solemn ode and in the middle of the fourth strophe the Dioscuri are forgotten and the two halves of the chorus begin to chaff each other. These sudden changes, which are characteristic of choral lyric, are disconcerting to a mere reader but were exciting and enjoyable to the Greek audience. In this poem the girls are all mentioned by name and would be well known to many of the audience, which would add greatly to their amusement. One semi-chorus is led by Hagesichora, the other by Agido. Each praises its own leader, finally all unite in praising the chief leader Hagesichora.

---

[62] The word means "turning"; hence the end of each strophe must originally have been marked by some turning movement of the chorus.

[63] If with Bergk we read 'Ορθίᾳ for 'Ορθρίᾳ but C. M. Bowra in *Class. Quart.*, xxviii. (1934), p. 35, shows good reason for supposing that some other deity, perhaps Dionysus with Helen, was being honoured.

Alcman's verse is marked by sweetness and light as if blue sky and a clear atmosphere had entered into it. He is a lover of natural beauty and all the sounds and silences of Nature, the stillness of night (Fr. 60) and the song of the birds, which was his model. "I know," he sings, "the songs of all the birds" (67) and again:

ἔπη τάδε καὶ μέλος ʼΑλκμὰν
εὗρε, γεγλωσσαμένον
κακκαβίδων στόμα συνθέμενος.

(Fr. 25 Bgk., 92 D.)[64]

Stesichorus of Himera

At the end of the seventh and the beginning of the sixth[65] there flourished in Himera, a mixed Dorian and Ionian colony in Sicily, the most important and influential lyric poet between Alcman and Pindar. Stesichorus[66] was not born in Himera but he lived and died there though he may also have lived in the Peloponnese.[67] His reputed tomb was at Catana and his own townsmen long commemorated him by his image on their coins; a statue of him was standing in Himera in Cicero's time. It was due to Stesichorus that the choral lyric passed from the narrow limits of the city-state to become the property and the delight of the whole Greek-speaking world. He emancipated it from the strict Doric of Alcman and, by drawing freely on Epic both in language and in matter, laid the foundations of the literary dialect of all choral poetry. In metre too he laid down lines which all his successors followed. He invented, or at any rate perfected, the system of triads — strophe, antistrophe and epode — in which the epode had a different metrical scheme from the strophe. This remained the regular form of the choral ode both in Pindar and in tragedy. Yet of this undoubted master we have only very short fragments which afford us no means of judging his majestic muse.[68] He wrote chiefly, but not only, hymns on a grand scale to be sung at festivals. We know the titles of many of these, *e.g.* Cycnus, Cerberus, Oresteia, Sack of Ilium, Helen, the Boar-hunt (of Calydon). From these it is evident that the myth was an all-important element in the hymn, not the local folk-tale such as Corinna used, but the Hellenic heritage of heroic tales used by Homer, Hesiod and the cyclic poets and later by the tragedians.[69] Like Pindar after him Stesichorus varied and occasionally rationalized the stories. There is a fragment of the Helen (26 Bgk.) which runs:

---

[64] "Aye, and Alcman did put together the tongued utterance of the *caccabis*, to make his twine of words and music." (J. M. Edmonds, ed. *Lyra Græca*, Vol. 1, p. 73)

[65] He referred to an eclipse of the sun (see Fr. 73 Bergk), probably that of 28 May 585.

[66] His name "chorus-arranger" is a nickname. His real name was Teisias. There was at least one other Stesichorus, a dithyrambic poet of the fourth century. See Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides*, p. 233 ff.

[67] C. M. Bowra in *Class. Quart.*, xxviii. 1934, p. 115 ff.

> Because Tyndareus, sacrificing to all the gods, forgot Cypris alone, giver of soothing gifts, she in wrath made the daughters of Tyndareus to be doubly and triply wedded and to be deserters of their husbands.

The poet was struck blind and attributed it to the vengeance of Helen; he therefore took back his words in the famous palinode quoted by Plato, *Phædrus*, 243*a*):

---

[68] *Stesichori graves Camenæ,* Horace.

[69] Æschylus called his plays "slices of Homer's banquet." We might add that Stesichorus first carved them. For he is the link between the Epic treatment of myth and that of Attic tragedy. One short fragment (Bergk 42, Diehl 15) on Clytæmnestra's dream, which Æschylus uses, suggests that if we had more of Stesichorus we might learn a good deal of the literary history of tragedy.

οὐκ ἔστ' ἔτυμος λόγος οὗτος·
οὐδ' ἔβας ἐν ναυσὶν ἐυσέλμοις,
οὐδ' ἵκεο πέργαμα τροίας. (Fr. 32.)[70]

The remainder of the palinode said that it was only a phantom of Helen that went to Troy (Plato, *Rep.*, 586*c*). The poet recovered his sight. Sometimes the narrative of the hymn concerns not heroic personages but characters of the writer's invention, *e.g.* in the *Radine* and the *Calyce*.

Ibycus of Rhegium

Ibycus was born and bred in Rhegium in S. Italy but for some time led a wandering life. Perhaps about 540 B.C. he settled at Samos at the court of the tyrant Polycrates' father. He was still living there during the reign of the son.[71] The legend of his murder and of the cranes which were the means of discovering the murderers, though it has given us one of Schiller's finest ballads, has no historical foundation. In early life Ibycus was a follower of Stesichorus, but during his sojourn at Samos he came under the influence of the Lesbian and Ionian poets and began to lose a little of the severity of his Doric training and to acquire something of the warmth and passion of the Ægean islands. He did not however discard the choral ode or its triple formation; even his love-poems were arranged for choral performance. He wrote numerous encomia. Some of his fragments are of great beauty, especially No. 1, a single surviving strophe of spring-time and love. The papyrus finds at Oxyrhynchus (*Ox. Pap.*, xv. 1790, Edm. 67) have given us a new fragment of some forty lines of a choral ode in honour of Polycrates. The myth refers to the heroes of the Trojan war, but the poet disclaims the task of telling their deeds [72] and passes to the praise of Polycrates: "Theirs for ever is a share of beauty and thou too Polycrates shalt have imperishable fame through my song and my fame."

---

[70] "This tale is not true. You did not go on well-benched ships, nor did you come to the citadel of Troy." (C. M. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry*, p. 122)

[71] This seems more likely than to suppose that Ibycus celebrated a grandfather of Polycrates of the same name. At any rate there is a mistake in Suidas' notice saying that Ibycus went to Samos in the reign of "Polycrates father of the tyrant." Either he meant grandfather (Æaces was the name of P.'s father) or we should read ὁ Πολυκράτους *τοῦ τυράννου πατήρ* instead of *ὁ Πολυκράτης ὁ τοῦ τυράννου πατήρ.*

Simonides of Ceos

By his use of the choral lyric to praise men, Ibycus was one of the causes of a great increase in the volume of choral poetry. Whether Ibycus and Anacreon received a direct payment at the Samian court we do not know, but certainly Simonides made the composition of encomia, including epinikian odes for the living and dirges for the dead, a very profitable occupation. Simonides was born in the Ionian island of Ceos about 557 B.C. His early training inclined him to elegy and epigram but he soon acquired the art of the choral lyric, and to the end of his long life continued to write both kinds of verse with remarkable skill. He lived for some time at Athens where he knew Anacreon. The tyrant Hipparchus paid him well, but after his murder Simonides joined those who praised the deed as a benefit to Athens. He may also have lived in Thessaly, for he praises Scopas of Crannon and the Aleuadæ of Larissa; but during the Persian wars he was apparently back at Athens, where he enjoyed the friendship of Themistocles. In 475, being now over eighty, he went to Syracuse to the court of Hiero where his nephew Bacchylides was. Here he met Pindar and Æschylus; here too he died about 468. It was said of him that to the end of his days he was always ready to "go sailing on a mat for the sake of money." [73] Pindar too (*Isthm.*, ii. 6) alludes to Simonides' commercial muse. Doubtless the charge was true, but Pindar was hardly the man who should have made it. It was Simonides' misfortune to become proverbial for niggardliness, and stories were invented about him and sayings attributed to him to illustrate or defend this trait. When asked whether it was better to become wise or rich, he is said to have replied that it was better to grow rich, as he always noticed that it was the wise men who wore out the doorsteps of the rich.

---

[72] This is interesting as showing that Pindar's eclectic use of myths was not without antecedents.

[73] Aristophanes, *Peace*, 699.

If we had half as many poems by Simonides as we have anecdotes about him, we should be in a better position to judge this copious and versatile writer. He was equally famous in elegy and in choral lyric, especially epinikia and threnoi. A story is told that after Marathon there was a competition at Athens for the best elegy on the fallen and that in it Simonides defeated Æschylus. This poem has not survived, but we have fragments of his elegy on those who fell at Salamis and Platæa (Frr. 83 and 84 Bergk). His acute observations and epigrams, in which he often followed Hesiod, gained for him a reputation for wisdom and he was sometimes included among the seven sages. In choral lyric he wrote hymns, pæans, dithyrambs, encomia, dirges and epinikian odes. It is often uncertain to which of these classes our surviving fragments should be assigned. A fine poem on those who fell at Thermopylæ might be called either an encomium or a threnos:

> Of those who died at Thermopylæ glorious is their fortune and noble their death; their tomb is an altar; instead of tears they have remembrance, for pity, praise. Such a burial neither rust nor all-conquering time shall blot out. . . . (Fr. 4 Bgk.)

The poem which refers to Danae and Perseus (37) may be a dithyramb or a dirge. It is preserved by Dionysius of Halicarnassus,[74] who deliberately transcribed it as if it were prose in order to show how difficult it was to discern in his day the metre of choral lyric. He proved his point and saved for us some twenty verses of Simonides which bear out Quintilian's (*Inst. Or.*, x. 1. 64) praise of his happy choice of words and his "præcipua in commovenda miseratione virtus." Of his epinikia our fragments are too short to admit of any study of their structure. Like all epinikia and much of Greek poetry in general they contain many moral reflections. The fragment on Virtue or Excellence (58) may be from an epinikion. It begins ἔστι τις λόγος τὰν ἀρετὰν ναίειν δυσαμβάτοις ἐπὶ πέτραις, and is a reminiscence of Hesiod (*W. and D.*, 289 ff.). But let no one think to establish any consistent moral philosophy for Simonides. He was, however, keenly interested in the study of right and wrong, and was much influenced by the work of the Sophists (see Pt. III). The famous poem (Fr. 5) which Protagoras, in Plato's dialogue of that name, cites and discusses, is a study of the problem of becoming and remaining a good man. It is addressed to Scopas and, whether it be an encomium or a skolion,[75] proceeds in the manner of a sophistic discussion. The saying of Pittacus, that it is difficult to be a good man, is disputed. Only the gods are good, and only those whom the gods love have any chance of goodness. The utterly blameless man is an impossibility. "But all those I praise and love who do not intentionally commit baseness; with necessity not even the gods contend" (ll. 15–16). Many of his pithy sayings were quoted in antiquity, such as: "Poetry is speaking painting, painting silent poetry." "Even the runaway in battle is caught by Death in the end."

---

[74] *De Comp. Verb*, ch. 26.

Pindar

Pindar was born at Cynoscephalæ near Thebes about 522 B.C. He came of an ancient and illustrious family, the Ægidæ. The old aristocratic families in the Greek states, though their political importance had greatly dwindled, were still influential in religion and in the festivals and games connected with it. At Athens, it is true, the genius of Pisistratus had done much to bring religion to the common people, and all through Greece new religious ideas were spreading (see Pt. III), but the religion of the great Olympians, especially Zeus and Apollo, was to the old families not merely a State-religion to be supported for patriotic reasons but a valuable part of their heritage, and many of its priesthoods were hereditary privileges. This aristocracy was as a rule far less narrowly nationalist than the average Greek democracy, and everywhere throughout Greece the old families long maintained a friendly intercourse between the different states. Pindar's own family the Ægidæ were not exclusively Theban but had branches in Sparta, Thera and Cyrene. Political barriers and futile animosities did much to destroy all this, and the temporary unity in face of the Persian menace could not save it. It is for this old aristocracy that Pindar stands; his family had held hereditary priesthoods, and it is likely that he himself was a priest of Apollo. At all events he early devoted himself to lyric poetry, and studied at Athens under Lasos of Hermione as well as in his native Thebes.[76] Success came to him early. At the age of twenty we find him employed by the great Thessalian family, the Aleuadæ of Larissa, to compose an epinikian ode (*Pythians*, x.). The victor honoured, the Thessalian boy-runner, Hippocleas, was not himself a member of the family; it would seem that the Aleuadæ used their influence to obtain for the young poet his first important commission. Their choice was justified; the tenth Pythian is by no means immature work, and several other early poems celebrate victors in the Pythian games (*Pyth.*, vi., vii., xii.). During the years of the Persian invasions, 490 and 480–478, we do not know what Pindar did. His country Thebes "medized," that is, sided with the Persians, and there is no evidence that Pindar actively opposed this policy. But his well-known Panhellenic sympathies make it impossible to believe the calumnies of Polybius that he actually encouraged medism. At any rate after the wars he clearly regretted the Theban attitude, and speaks of Salamis and Platæa as great victories, *e.g. Isthm.*, iv.–v. 60 ff.:

---

[75] Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides*, pp. 180–183.

> Now too in war Salamis the city of Ajax could bear witness that she was kept safe by Ægina's sailors in

---

[76] On his relations with Corinna and Myrtis, see above, p. 120.

> the ruinous storm of Zeus, the hail-like bloody death of innumerable men. Yet dip the boast in silence; Zeus dispenses this and that, Zeus the lord of all.[77]

Perhaps he would "dip the boast in silence" because he hangs his head for Thebes. He was now (478) in the forties and at the height of his poetical development. From Syracuse, from Agrigentum, from Cyrene, from wherever in the Greek world came competitors to the games, came also commissions to Pindar to celebrate their victories. For some time he was at Athens, where he wrote dithyrambs. About 476 he made a journey to Sicily, whence so many of his patrons had come. He may also have visited his relations in Cyrene in Africa, whose king Arcesilas is celebrated in the famous fourth Pythian. There was a tradition too that he was entertained by a Macedonian King Alexander, and that this friendship led Alexander the Great to spare Pindar's house when he razed the rest of Thebes. The last ode that can be dated with certainty is *Pyth.*, viii. in 446. He died in 442. In the course of his career he amassed wealth in which he gloried greatly and from which he gave lavishly.

Pindar was a prolific writer. The four books of epinikian odes are but a fraction of his total output, which included hymns, dithyrambs, partheneia, pæans, hyporchemes, dirges, encomia and skolia, of which some fragments survive. One of his hyporchemes[78] (Fr. 107 Bergk) was a truly magnificent poem on an eclipse of the sun (? 478 B.C.). We have sixteen lines beginning

> *ἀκτὶς Ἀελίου τί πολύσκοπε μήσεαι, ὦ μᾶτερ ὀμμάτων.*[79]

He prays that it may not mean ill for Thebes, but

---

[77] Tr. J. B. Bury.

[78] From the words of Dionysius Hal., who preserves the fragment, it would seem to be from a hyporcheme but fragments of the same poem have been found in the papyrus containing the *Pæans* (see below); the classification therefore remains uncertain.

[79] "Beam of the sun! O thou that seest afar, what wilt thou be devising?" (Sir John Sandys, *The Odes of Pindar*, p. 547)

> If thou bringest foreboding of war or failure of crops or unspeakably heavy fall of snow or destroying strife or emptying of the sea over the land or freezing of the earth or a wet summer-heat drenched in ceaseless rain, or if thou wilt flood the earth utterly and make a new race of men entirely, I make no moan, for with all men shall I suffer.

His dithyrambs to Dionysus show a variety of subjects.[80] From one of them come the famous lines in praise of Athens (Fr. 76),

ὦ ταὶ λιπαραὶ καὶ ἰοστέφανοι και ἀοίδιμοι
Ἑλλάδος ἔρεισμα, κλειναὶ Ἀθᾶναι,
δαιμόνιον πτολίεθρον,[81]

which must surely have been written after Marathon or Salamis. That part of Pindar's work, other than the epinikian odes, which we know best is his pæans. Parts of a number of these were discovered in Egypt and published in 1908 (*Ox. Pap.*, v. 841). The pæans were usually in honour of Apollo or Artemis and, like the dithyrambs to Dionysus, generally composed to the order of the city requiring them; hence in addition to honouring the god they praised the city too. Thus the second pæan, ordered by Abdera in Thrace, opens with a call to the founder, Abderus, who is then linked up with Apollo and Aphrodite. The fourth was written for Ceos, the fifth for Eubœa or Athens. The sixth was ordered by Delphi but sung by an Æginetan chorus, and Pindar, a great admirer of Ægina, praises their city. Interesting as these pæans are, they are not Pindar at his best. It is to be hoped that the future may reveal more of his dithyrambs and hyporchemes, but in the meantime his glory must rest chiefly on his epinikia, as it did even in the days when all his seventeen books were known.

---

[80] See below, p. 146.

[81] "Oh! the gleaming, and the violet-crowned, and the sung in story; the bulwark of Hellas, famous Athens, city divine." (Sir John Sandys, *The Odes of Pindar*, p. 557)

The epinikian odes were written and composed to be sung by a chorus [82] in honour of the victor in some event at one of the athletic festivals. Where and when the celebration and the performance took place was a matter for the victor or his family to arrange. It might form part of an official welcome on his return to his own city, or it might be a private affair at his own house. Very rarely would it be performed at the scene of the victory. The presence of the poet was not essential. Music and song had become more specialized since the days of Alcman when the poet trained his own chorus. The odes of Pindar are in four books each named after the meeting of which the events are celebrated [83] — Olympian, Pythian, Nemean and Isthmian. While there were many athletic meetings in Greece (*e.g.* at the Panatheneia at Athens), the majority were local and only these four were Panhellenic and observed as festivals by all states alike. More than any other meetings they attracted competitors from all the Greek-speaking world. Like the dramatic and musical contests these festivals were religious. The Olympian games at Elis and the Nemean honoured Zeus, the Pythian at Delphi honoured Apollo, the Isthmian Poseidon, but this did not in any way restrict the poet, from whom Apollo, lord of the lyre, was never absent. At each of these meetings there were the usual events, often with a special class for boys in each case. They included boxing, wrestling, and a combination of these (pancration), foot-races, long and short, as well as a race in armour and the pentathlon, a composite event including running, jumping (long), wrestling, discus and javelin throwing. Victories in all these events are celebrated by Pindar. Then there are the more spectacular events, the horse-race and chariot-race, immensely popular with the spectators and with the wealthy Sicilian tyrants who were Pindar's most generous patrons. At the Pythian games there was also a flute-playing contest (*Pyth.*, xii.).

---

[82] With the possible exception of *Olymp.*, i.

[83] The classification of *Pyth.*, ii., is incorrect: the event was a chariot-race in a local meeting at Thebes; also *Nem.*, ix. and x.

The Pindaric Ode

The structure of a Pindaric ode is often extremely complex, and no hard-and-fast rules can be laid down. Every poet is a law to himself and even the most lawless have some method. Unless a poet give to the world an account of his laws, we are dependent for our knowledge on the work itself. But it is difficult to understand a poet's work without some knowledge of his laws. This vicious circle is nowhere more conspicuous than in Pindar, whose methods and purpose do not always stand out clearly. To put it bluntly, we often ask ourselves what he is driving at, why he says this or that and why at this or that point. No rule of thumb can be given to enable a reader to answer all such queries whenever they arise but some general considerations may be of service. It should be remembered that in every Pindaric ode there are at least two rival themes clamouring for expression and often sharing the honours very unevenly. These are (1) the occasion of the poem, the victory in the games, the victor and his family and native land, and (2) Pindar himself, what he thought about it all, what he thought about his own poetry both in relation to the event celebrated and in more general aspects, about the gods and the stories told of them, about the glory of the nobility, the moral aspect of success and failure, strenuousness and its rewards both in the field of athletics and in that of song. With bewildering suddenness his song, to use one of his own similes, passes like a bee from flower to flower. He cannot and will not suppress his own enthusiasms, his own personality, his own conception of his art for the sake of praising a human being. Had he done so, some of his patrons might have been more flattered, but the odes would have had no interest save for the victor's family, no appeal to a wider circle; never passing from the particular to the universal, they would have lacked the perennial greatness of true poetry. This they do not lack. The greatness of Pindar lies in the fact that he does all that was asked of him by his patrons, introduces and praises the victor and his city, tells of the victory and illustrates it, yet rises superior to the trammels imposed on him, not be it noted by breaking them but while still remaining within them. For all his apparent haphazardness Pindar is a careful and elaborate artist, but the lofty rhyme which he builds is not a uniform wall of bricks but a vast pediment with a series of vivid pictures all contained within the single structure. The conflict between the two groups of themes, those connected directly with the victory and all the others, is always going on and Pindar is of course well aware of it and allows himself full liberty to decide which shall have the mastery at a given moment and to give little or no warning when a change is to take place and a new image is flashed before our eyes. The old religion, the glory of song, the old nobility and the munificent support of religion, athletics and poetry, all these arouse Pindar's enthusiasm and often lead his muse far from the particular occasion of the ode, but they do not cause him to stray from its traditional form.

Now the epinikian ode[84] normally contains three elements, (1) the event celebrated, (2) a myth, (3) moral reflections. These three are woven together into a kind of pattern and the whole, so to speak, superimposed on a metrical and musical pattern consisting usually of triads, groups of three strophes. The one pattern does not seek to conform to the other, it rather avoids it; the metrical scheme marches steadily on and bears no relation to the arrangement of subject-matter. In the verbal pattern the myth generally occupies a central position, while the victor is frequently introduced near the beginning and again near the end. But the arrangement of a Pindaric ode is not fixed and the pattern, like the metrical pattern, is woven afresh every time. In the short fourth Olympian the myth comes at the end; in the first Nemean it is well in the second half. In the ninth Pythian the victor in the armour-race gets little attention; nearly the whole is myth. In the thirteenth Olympian the name of the victor is not mentioned till after much praise of his city Corinth. Nor can the function of the myth be stated in terms which shall apply equally to every ode. The myth was an integral part of the traditional scheme, which Pindar used to the full and often made it the very soul of his ode. But though the myth was given him, his handling of it and the uses to which he put it are all his own. In the first place he is rarely content, here unlike Bacchylides, to tell the story plainly.[85] A few allusions, a few vivid pictures are often enough to recall a story with which all would be familiar: he did not write for the ignorant. Secondly, the function of the myth varies with the subject of the ode. The simplest use is to tell a story of one of the victor's supposed heroic ancestors,[86] or else to tell a tale the hero of which presents some features which the victor praised may be said to share. For example, in *Pyth.*, i., words are carefully chosen which shall apply equally to Hiero and to Philoctetes. Both were crippled, yet both led armies to victory, Philoctetes at Troy, Hiero at Himera, where the Carthaginians had recently been defeated. As Odysseus had to beseech the aid of Philoctetes, so the Sicilian Greeks had begged help of Hiero. But often the connection is not so obvious. Pindar was not bound by any law compelling him to use myth in this particular way. In tragedy, especially in Æschylus, the choral odes often have no very close connection with the plot, and Pindar's myths do not always illustrate the victor or praise his city. But even if they do none of these things there is still a lesson to be drawn from them and from the moral reflections to which they may lead. Examine the structure of *Pyth.*, ii., one of the most difficult of the odes, and single out the salient points of its complicated design. The victor is again Hiero of Syracuse, the event a chariot race about 476 B.C. Recently Hiero had come to the aid of the Epizephyrian

---

[84] Various attempts have been made to find a stock pattern for the epinikian ode, *e.g.* that it followed the nomes of Terpander and consisted of ἀρχά, ὀμφαλός, σφραγίς, but even this simple arrangement, beginning, middle and end, is not consistently followed.

---

[85] Lyric poetry does not profess to tell a story *fully*, see p. 126 note, but Bacchylides and Simonides are generally fuller than Pindar.

[86] Thus Theron claimed descent from Cadmus, who is the subject of the myth in *Olymp.*, ii.

Locrians in a war with Anaxilas of Rhegium (ll. 18–20). War too was brewing between Hiero and Theron of Agrigentum, one of Pindar's patrons, a circumstance which in itself must have made the composition of the ode difficult. The poem opens with a eulogy of Syracuse, then of Hiero, whose victory was due to the favour of Artemis and Hermes. As Cinyras of Cyprus was praised, so Pindar praises Hiero who had saved Locris. Then suddenly:

> Ixion, they say, by command of the gods, revolving on his winged wheel, gave this saying to men, "Reward thy benefactor at all times with generous recompense."

The story of Ixion is told; how he was well treated by Zeus but repaid his kindness only by amorous designs on Hera, for which presumption he was condemned to the wheel. Here there is no intention of comparing Hiero to Ixion. The illustration looks like a bold call to Hiero not to stint his payment even as Pindar does not stint his praise. But nothing of the kind is *said*. When on the threshold of a risky theme, Pindar often says something perfectly safe, passing thereby to something else, here to *δάκος ἀδινὸν κακαγοριᾶν*, "the ravening tooth of slander" (Farnell):

God doeth all He purposeth. God flies
Beyond the soaring eagle, and outspeeds
The sea-born dolphin. Some proud men He brings
To nought, and some to fadeless glory leads.
Mine be it to eschew fierce slander's stings,
Since from far off mine eyes
Have seen Archilochus in parlous state,
The bitter-tongued who fed his soul with spite;
For only when the happy Hours unite
Wisdom with Wealth man finds his fairest fate.[87]

This combination of wealth and understanding Hiero has. There is no suggestion of any accusation, rather a warning not to heed slander but to be the glorious prince that Pindar has shown him to be. Children may love a monkey (but a man of understanding is not deceived by any "playing to the gallery"). Others may approve the craftiness of a fox, cheating their enemies, but full of plausible words, but for Pindar the honest outspoken (εὐθύγλωσσος) man stands first in every kind of polity. Do not strive against God, who raises some and lowers others. Greedy and envious people are discontented with God's government and

---

[87] Third strophe; tr. C. J. Billson.

> . . . strain the measuring-rod beyond its bound,
> And through their own hearts drive the cruel stake,
> Or ever they can mete their chosen ground.
> Far fairer is his fate
> Who meekly bears the yoke. 'Tis nowise well
> To kick against the pricks. O be it mine
> For noble souls sweet descants to design
> And with their boon society to dwell! [88]

So the ode ends with a battery of Pindar's own shafts. Hiero has been abundantly praised though there is little mention of this particular success in the chariot-race. This is not unusual. In other odes the structure is different; each must be studied by itself. But in all there is the same variety and colour, the same duality, Pindar and the victory.

Yet though Pindar speaks fearlessly in his own person, it is not the poet as a historical personage that emerges, as does Hesiod. It is Pindar the aristocrat, Pindar the champion of religion, Pindar the artist. Even within the limits of these topics our estimate of Pindar's views and character must take into account the fact that not all he says is meant to be new or original. We have already noted his skilful use of "safe" remarks, little more than ordinary tags of Greek morality. It would be an easy but futile task to show that what he says at one time does not always tally with what he says at another. Still the reader cannot fail to be impressed by Pindar's firm belief (1) in the aristocracy and its peculiar virtues of strength and generosity; (2) in the gods and the games; (3) in his own art. His belief in aristocracy is not merely or chiefly a belief in a form of government (*Pyth.*, x. 71–72). Their wealth and munificence, their patronage of song, their efforts and expenditure (πόνος δαπάνα τε) on training teams and entering for the games are for Pindar deserving of all praise. He himself is one of them and is a strong believer in heredity both in men and horses. As for the gods, they are ever present, especially Zeus and Apollo. All the gods and goddesses appear, yet he often speaks of God in the singular. He was deeply and sincerely religious, untouched by the philosophic scepticism of Ionia. This does not mean that he accepted without question everything that current mythology said. Orthodoxy did not demand that. Besides, Pindar, unlike Homer, was a theologian who thought and felt deeply about the gods, and was fully alive to the importance of the theory that the fate of souls after death depended on their actions in this life (*Olymp.*, ii.). He is anxious to defend the gods against calumny. If anyone said that the gods were cannibals, that Demeter actually ate part of the body of Pelops served up by Tantalus, he lied. If Pelops had an ivory shoulder he was born with it, and the story about Tantalus is an invention of his enemies. Therefore Pindar is satisfied that the banquet of the gods was as it should be, εὐνομώτατος (*Olymp.*, i.). We may smile at Pindar's attempts to clean up mythology, but his moral earnestness, like Hesiod's, commands respect. Wealth is a great boon; it makes men great and gives them power to benefit sport and song; but it is also a danger, it leads to κόρος, an untranslatable word denoting both surfeit of riches and the smug self-satisfaction which that induces. Such a habit of mind breeds ὕβρις, lawless and insolent violence, which will surely be followed by ἄτη, heaven-sent disaster. Therefore the possession of riches calls for rigid self-control, not aiming too far or "straining the measuring-rod beyond its bound." It is not a new doctrine. It is an extension of the familiar μηδὲν ἄγαν (nothing too much) and σωφροσύνη (moderation), newly and more earnestly expressed:

---

[88] Tr. the same.

> Not for long cometh prosperity to men, whensoever it cometh in overflowing abundance. Little will I be among the little, great among the great; the fortune that is given me will I keep, tending it as best I may. And if God should offer me ease and wealth, I have hope to win great glory hereafter.
>
> (*Pyth.*, iii. 105–111.)

Here speaks the poet himself openly desiring wealth in moderation and lasting fame.

It is however Pindar the artist that attracts most the student of poetry. No poet has ever been more conscious of the glory of his calling and of his own skill. Compared with him the eagle of Zeus, other poets, he says, alluding to Simonides and Bacchylides, are but chattering crows:

True art is his whom Nature's self hath taught;
    But those who learn by rote
    To sound a senseless note
Clack like two daws whose utterance is nought,
Against the bird of Zeus self-poised in god-like power.[89]
(*Olymp.*, ii. 94–97.)

In the same ode he speaks of the many shafts in his quiver which are unintelligible to the common herd but *φωνάεντα συνετοῖσιν*, "full of meaning for those that have understanding." Thus does Pindar glory in his own difficulty. There are men of action (*χερσὶ βιαταί*), men of ready speech (*περίγλωσσοι*) and poets *σοφοί* (*Pyth.*, i. 42), *σοφία* often means skill in song. Pindar is well aware too of his own commercial value; he is conferring a privilege on those for whom he writes by associating their names with an immortal poem. "Their excellence lives by reason of glorious song; to few is that easy to win (*Pyth.*, iii. 114–115). Niggardly payment for these services arouses his indignation. "If any hoard his wealth hidden within his house and jeer at others (who are generous), he reckons not that the soul which he shall deliver to Hades is without glory" (*Isth.*, i. 67–68). Lastly, Pindar is his own best commentator; his own brilliant descriptions of song are a help to an understanding of him. His favourite metaphor is to speak of his song as shafts from a bow. He does not say that the music of the lyre is like the flight of an arrow, lyre and arrow are identified (*Pyth.*, i.). The lyre *hits* (τεύχει) the overture; the drowsy eagle succumbs to its *blows*, and, with one of his gloriously bold mixtures, all its *shafts soothe* the mind of the gods. Sometimes his verse is aptly described as a piece of architecture: "To make a goodly portico for the house we will set up golden pillars as for a wondrous palace; at the outset of our work we must put a forefront visible afar" (*Olymp.*, iii.). Yet in *Nemean* v. he says he is no maker of statues to sit still on pedestals. Here again he is right; the image of statue or building is incomplete; it is too static. It may convey grandeur and beauty of structure, which are certainly marks of Pindar's verse, but the metaphor of the arrow is his favourite; it is swift and sure. At other times his song is a vast treasure-house or a field to be tilled or flowers. All these pick out and emphasize some quality of Pindar's own verse, wealth, brightness, loftiness, speed, brilliance.

---

[89] Tr. Billson.

In Pindar the epinikian ode reaches its highest development. We have seen that it owed much to Stesichorus who made the choral lyric a medium for retelling the tales of old mythology, and we have seen how Pindar delighted to do the same in his own way. Hence it is sometimes said that Pindar stands midway between Epic and Drama. But the relationship to drama, to the choral parts of tragedy, is much closer than his relationship to Epic. For one thing, Pindar and Æschylus were contemporaries; Pindar comes at the end of the history of choral lyric as an independent composition, Æschylus near the beginning of its history as a part of drama — a fact which should be borne in mind while this narrative passes to other forms of literature. Points of contact and similarity are therefore inevitable; but Pindar's relationship to Homer is very much slighter, indeed in some ways it is slighter than that of Æschylus to Homer. Even in the most "epic" of the odes, the Fourth Pythian, the most magnificent in structure and by far the longest, where the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece is told at length and where for a time we forget about a chorus and think we are reading a narrative poem, even there we are struck not so much by any reminiscences of the epic tradition as by its independence of it, by its thoroughly Pindaric manner and spirit. It is true however that in language the artificial literary "Doric" of choral lyric shares certain linguistic features with the dialect of Homer, but that is a heritage common to all Greek poetry. What is more significant is the contribution of choral lyric, especially of Pindar, to the language. The richness and vividness of Pindar's vocabulary owe a little to the language of Homer — but he often disdains the epithet which epic had made familiar — a little more to his predecessors in the same field — how much we cannot say, but a great deal of his glorious and untranslatable language must be Pindar's own. Phrases such as *ἀναξιφόρμιγγες ὕμνοι*,[90] *ἀκαμαντόποδός τ' ἀπήνας . . . δῶρα*,[91] *δόξαν . . . τιν' ἐπὶ γλώσσᾳ ἀκόνας λιγυρᾶς*,[92] his variety of compound words, especially those compounded with *ἁδύς*, *βαρύς*, *βαθύς*, his bold and shifting metaphors and images, even such little things as his use of *ἀμφί* and *ἐπί*, are unforgettably if not unmistakably Pindaric.

Bacchylides

Down to the year 1897 the poems of Bacchylides were known to us only by a few short fragments which suggested that he was chiefly a writer of love- and drinking-songs. This should be a warning against estimating a poet on insufficient data. For papyrus remains of about the first century B.C. have now given us about a thousand lines of epinikian and dithyrambic poems. Bacchylides was the son of a sister of Simonides and was born in Ceos probably about 510 B.C. He was thus a younger contemporary of Pindar. He was for a time an exile from Ceos and was presented by his uncle at the court of Hiero of Syracuse. Practically nothing else of importance is known of his life. The discovery of the poems of Bacchylides has borne out the verdict of the author of the treatise

---

[90] *Olymp.*, ii. 1.

[91] *Ib.*, v. 3.

[92] *Ib.*, vi. 82.

On the Sublime.[93] Though not a poet of the first rank, Bacchylides is a graceful and polished writer. One can well imagine that his triumphal odes were greatly in demand by those victors who preferred not to be sung by the great but unaccountable Theban. It is as if Bacchylides were a safe and competent portrait-painter whose work would be an ornament to a public hall, Pindar a more original artist of whom the sitter might be afraid lest the result should not be all that he expected. In Bacchylides there is no strong personality breaking through and demanding expression. There is plenty of originality in language, especially in the formation of picturesque compound words, but there is none of the confusing and dazzling brilliance of Pindar. He does not flit from flower to flower with bewildering suddenness, but proceeds at a more even pace to do the task set, praise the victor, tell a myth, and make moral observations. And it cannot be denied that in some ways he performs his task better than Pindar. It is only because he does not soar above his task that he is excelled by Pindar. In his own way and for his own purpose he is at least as skilful an artist. His metaphors are not so bold and mixed but they are quite as vivid and their application clearer and simpler. Pindar starts his first Olympian with *ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ*, water — gold untarnishable — flaming fire; all these, as we see before the end of the strophe, typify the unmatched magnificence of the Olympic Games. Bacchylides uses similar metaphors in a plainer way and quite as aptly. Prefacing his words with a phrase deliberately reminiscent of Pindar's *φωνάεντα συνετοῖσιν*, "To him that hath intelligence I sing words of understanding," he goes on: "The deep, wide air is undefiled, sea-water does not become fœtid, gold is a joy for ever, but when man has once passed hoary old age, he cannot again recover his youth" (iii.[94] 85–90). The parallel is close, air and sea may be polluted but they recover as man cannot.

More even than Pindar, Bacchylides is influenced by

---

[93] Pseudo-Longinus, *περὶ ὕψους*, 33. 5.

[94] The numbering is that of Jebb's edition (1905).

Stesichorus who established the myth in choral poetry. He enjoys telling the myths, and is not at pains to defend or purify them. He is generally fuller in his narrative than Pindar but, as is usual in lyric, not every episode in a story is necessarily included and a certain knowledge is taken for granted. The myth is usually a heroic tale (No. xii. has an incident from the Trojan war), but in iii. is told a pre-Herodotean version of the story of Crœsus and the miraculous rescue of him and his family from a burning pyre. The myth illustrates the reward of piety, especially Crœsus' loyal support of Delphic Apollo. Another good example of Bacchylides' epinikians is v. which celebrates the same victory as Pindar's first Olympian,[95] namely, that of Hiero with his famous horse, Pherenicus of which he says "with his hand on his heart" [96]: "Never in any race as he galloped to the finish was he begrimed with dust by horses ahead of him" (43–45). The ode opens directly with an appeal to Hiero to turn aside from the cares of State and listen to this message from his Cean guest-friend, Bacchylides. Then

> Cleaving with swift dark wings the deep air aloft, the eagle, messenger of Zeus the wide-ruling Thunderer, is sure and confident in his mighty strength. The twittering birds cower in terror. The mountain tops of the great world check him not, nor the rugged, steep waves of the tireless sea. Borne by a breeze from the west he wafts his feathered plumage in the unharvested void, seen afar among men. Thus have I too now before me countless paths in every direction to sing thy prowess, by grace of dark-haired Victory and brazen-breasted Ares. (v. 17–34.)

Again the comparison is straightforward, the *τῶς νῦν καὶ ἐμοὶ* at the beginning of the epode makes it clear. In the second strophe, after saying that no man is fortunate in all things, he gives as examples Heracles and Meleager. When Heracles descended into Hades to recover Persephone, he met Meleager and was about to shoot at the lifeless shade when Meleager stopped him. In the epic manner Heracles asks who he is, and hears in reply how Meleager lost his life, when his mother unwittingly burnt the log with which his safety was bound up. Heracles is moved to tears and, struck with the young man's beauty, asks whether he has a sister alive for Heracles to marry. Meleager tells of his sister Deianeira and here the myth breaks off. The theme has been illustrated by Meleager's fate; there was no need to detail the misfortunes which came to Heracles through Deianeira. Thus the myth ends somewhat abruptly with a call to Calliope to stay her well-wrought chariot and return again to Hiero, his horse and Syracuse. There is an air of sadness about this poem, as about much of Bacchylides' work. Here it is perhaps partly due to the fact that Hiero was seriously ill. Hence the myth is chosen to illustrate the mixture of good and bad fortune which is the lot of the sick but victorious Hiero. Any more direct allusion to his incurable disease would have been cruel and tactless.

---

[95] 476 B.C. Others deny the connection and make 472 the date of Bacchyl. v. This would mean that the horse Pherenicus, who won his first race in 482, would have had a remarkably long racing career. See Jebb, pp. 198–199.

[96] Literally "laying (my hand) on the earth," to call to witness the gods below. B. likes the phrase; cp. vii. 41.

Not less important are the dithyrambs of Bacchylides. As a type of lyric the dithyramb is not easy to define. It was originally a song about Dionysus. Archilochus was one of its earliest exponents. The half-legendary Arion of Lesbos [97] is supposed to have made it choral. Under Pisistratus a dithyrambic contest was instituted at the Great Dionysia by Lasos of Hermione, a teacher of Pindar (*c.* 508 B.C.). But other myths were made the subject of the dithyramb even when it was performed at a Dionysiac festival; it became in fact a choral presentation of scenes from any heroic legend. Our remains of the dithyrambs of Simonides, of Lamprocles of Athens (*c.* 500), of Praxilla of Sicyon (*c.* 475) are slight, nor have we much of Pindar's (see above), but six of the poems (xiv.–xix. Jebb) in the Bacchylides papyrus are classed as dithyrambs by the Alexandrians. Some are much mutilated, but all except xvii. have the triad arrangement. They are not directly concerned with Dionysus, but the Io (xviii.) is a myth connected with him and was performed at a festival in his honour. Other subjects are Antenor (xiv.), Heracles (xv.) and Theseus (xvi. and xvii.). No. xvi. should probably be classed as a pæan for Delos, but it may be that in Alexandrian times any account in choral lyric of a heroic legend could be called a dithyramb. Whatever its proper classification, it is a pleasing poem about the voyage of Theseus and the other young men and maidens to Crete. Only one incident is told, how Theseus, challenged by Minos, dived to visit his father Poseidon. No. xvii. is in the form of a dialogue, alternate strophes being sung by a chorus and by a representative, perhaps a half-chorus, of Ægeus King of Athens, who in reply to their questions tells the news of the approach of a mighty man, slayer of monsters. This is his own son Theseus, whom he has never seen. Nothing can be inferred about the dithyrambic origin of tragedy (see Pt. IV) from this dialogue, since tragedy was in full vigour when it was written.[98]

---

[97] See above, p. 109.

Bacchylides, as we have seen, was much more impersonal than Pindar, but sometimes he seems to speak his own mind. The following passage from the first epinikian ode provides an interesting contrast to Pindar's view of wealth:

> I say and will always say that to have excellence (*ἀρετή*) is the greatest glory; wealth cometh even to a worthless man, though it will exalt a man's spirit. But he that deals fairly with the gods cheers his heart with a better hope still. And if a mortal man has good health and can live on what he has, he rivals the chiefest in the land; in every state of mortal life cometh joy if only one is free of sickness and helpless poverty. The rich man longs for great things, the poor for lesser; but to have abundance of everything is no blessing to

---

[98] Possibly the influence is in the reverse direction. It is not unlikely that the development of dialogue in tragedy led to attempts to make the performance of dithyrambs more dramatic.

> men; they do but seek ever after fleeting things to catch them. He whose soul is battered by empty cares has honour while he lives but no longer. But excellence, while it cometh not to any man save by labour, yet carried through to perfection at the end leaves to him even in death the much envied reward of Fame.
>
> (i. 49–74.)

Such was the gospel of Bacchylides, no less noble but homelier and more practical.

All through the great period of drama performances of dithyrambs were extremely popular but they ceased to count for much as literature. While tragedy came to depend less and less on song, the dithyramb went in the other direction. Both form and content were made subservient to music. This of course is not true of Bacchylides, who, in spite of innovations around him, kept to the old style. But as early as 500 B.C. we have the protest of Pratinas (Fr. 1) against the growing encroachment of the flute accompaniment. A younger contemporary of Bacchylides, called Melanippides, not only abandoned the triad form for the dithyramb but made use of no strict metrical arrangement at all. The process was carried further by his pupil Philoxenus (435–380), whose dithyrambs were universally admired and sung for the sake of the music.

Already Phrynis of Mytilene (fifth century) had been accused by the comic poets of debasing all lyric poetry. He was a teacher of Timotheus of Miletus (*c.* 450–357), whose immense vogue shows to what depths lyric had sunk. He lived much at Athens and wrote dithyrambs and monodic songs. A papyrus containing 253 verses of his *Persæ* was discovered in 1905. Its theme is the battle of Salamis; its style and language seem to strive to be Æschylean, but only succeed in being ridiculous. He is however important in the history of music,[99] and the monodic songs in some of Euripides' later plays may owe something to his influence.

---

[99] See p. 299.

PART THREE

From Myth to History and Philosophy

THE BEGINNINGS of Greek Prose Literature are very obscure. To us it seems the natural thing that as human intercourse is carried on in ordinary speech, so the records of it should be preserved in ordinary prose. But such was not always the case and in Greek literature prose is a comparatively late invention. The oldest method of literary expression, the oldest way of recording any story or fact was in hexameter verse. Homer and Hesiod are the oldest Greek historians and philosophers. Not only was it easier to remember verse than prose, but all tradition was in favour of its use. Myth, history and cosmogony had always been recorded in hexameters and this tradition died hard, especially in cosmogony.[1] Inscriptions (except dedications) and laws and accounts did not of course use metre, but down to the sixth century B.C. the hexameter was to the Greeks what prose is to us, the normal means of *literary* expression. As myth and history received equal credence, there was no essential difference between them, nothing to suggest that while verse was proper to myth, history demanded a different treatment. Similarly the earliest attempts at scientific literature naturally followed their predecessor, the cosmological and mythological poem.

Myth and History in Verse

It is not therefore surprising that when prose first began it was not at once received into general use either for history or philosophy. The mythico-historical verse-writers from Eumelus to Antimachus cover the whole period of Herodotus and Thucydides. They are a backwash of Epic and are mentioned here rather than in Part I in order to emphasize the long-continued life of hexameter verse, and to show that the influence of Homer and Hesiod was as strong in Greek historical writing as it was in poetry proper. Eumelus of Corinth, to whom some of the cyclic epics (see p. 64) were ascribed, was the author of various mythological poems, but his most important work was his lost Κορινθιακά, an account of the early history of Corinth. It is known to have dealt with Ephyra, wife of Epimetheus the first dweller in Corinthian land, with the sons of Helios, one of whom held Sicyon and the other Corinth or Ephyra, with Corinthus the eponymous founder, with Medea, Sisyphus and other figures of early Corinthian legend. The facts are thus drawn entirely from heroic myth, but at least it is an attempt to write the traditional history of a city. Doubtless the Samian ἀρχαιολογία of Semonides was something similar, and the "Naupactian verses" of (?) Charon of Lampsacus which used stories both of the Argonauts and from the *Odyssey*. On the eastern side of the Ægean we have Asius of Samos whose genealogical method recalls the *Theogony* of Hesiod, Pisander of Rhodes (? 600 B.C.) and especially Panyasis of Halicarnassus (*c.* 500 B.C.) an uncle of Herodotus who wrote a *Heracleia* in 9000 verses. Our longest fragment — eighteen lines preserved by Stobæus — happens to be in praise of wine and to be imitative of certain passages in Hesiod's *Works and Days*. For his matter he was probably indebted to Pisander who also wrote on Heracles. The fragments of the *Heracleia* show no reason why their author should have been so famous. Like Eumelus, Panyasis attempted a verse history of his own land Ἰωνικά of which little is known. Xenophanes too wrote a poem on the founding of Colophon. Here may be mentioned Chœrilus (of Samos?) (fifth century) who wrote a verse history of the Persian Wars.[2] There is an interesting fragment, preserved by Josephus (*Contra Apionem*, i. 173), which records the fact that in the Persian host there was "a remarkable tribe, speaking a Phœnician tongue and dwelling in the Solymian Mountains near a wide lake," an obvious allusion, says Josephus, to the

---

[1] Cp. Part I, note 52.

---

[2] A papyrus fragment of the third century A.D. (*Ox. Pap.*, xi. 1399) gives us just the title, which reads *Χοιρίλου ποιήματα βαρβαρικὰ μηδικὰ περσικὰ*, which suggests that there were two subdivisions of *τὰ βαρβαρικὰ*, or else that the whole was in three parts, which is less likely.

Jews. Lastly, about 400 B.C. we have Antimachus of Colophon[3] who, according to an epigram in the Anthology (*A.P.*, vii. 409), was second only to Homer as Poseidon is to Zeus; the same poet when reading aloud found that his audience had dwindled to one, but as that one was Plato he read on (Cicero, *Brutus*, 191). Whether true or false, the story agrees with his reputation for being a heavy and difficult author. His qualities, however, appealed to the Alexandrians, who included him in their canon of Epic poets. The few surviving lines of his *Thebais* are not inspiring. Presumably he owed much to the *Thebais* of the epic cycle (see above, p. 64), but his date is too late to allow him to be classified as one of the cyclic poets. There was, however, a cyclic poet, Antimachus of Teos (Schol. Aristoph., *Peace*, 1270), who was supposed to be the author of the *Epigoni*, part of the Theban cycle.

The Beginnings of Prose

Like Epic and Lyric, but unlike Drama, Greek prose began in Ionia. What brought about its invention it is difficult to say, but its beginnings coincide with a marked advance in Ionian thought — the growing spirit of free enquiry which is the first essential both for historical and scientific study. It is likely that this enquiring spirit was the result of contact between Ionia and the East. Becoming acquainted with new points of view, new ways of living and thinking, the Asiatic Greeks began to ask themselves whether their own ways were necessarily right. Some of them may actually have seen works of prose literature in other languages or at least have had some knowledge of their contents; but it is more likely that the first prose literature was not a conscious imitation of a foreign model but, at any rate in part, a revolt against a literary tradition. Refusing to be bound either in matter or form they abandoned the use of metre. The immediate result was, as might be expected, mere formlessness. Writing prose was at first like stringing beads, and the rhetoricians aptly named the earliest prose λέξις εἰρομένη, "linked" language. It cannot however be pretended that this is an adequate account of the matter. The abandonment of metre may be sufficient to account for such prose as that of Acusilaus, a mere transcriber, but the prose of Herodotus, although it is "linked" in style and although its author was thoroughly versed in Epic poetry,[4] is quite inexplicable on the supposition that the birth of prose-literature was merely the dropping of metre. We have more first-hand acquaintance with pre-Herodotean prose than with pre-Homeric verse, but it is at best slight, and limited to those writers whose chief literary antecedents were the heroic and cosmological myth. But Herodotus as we shall see was above all a story-teller, and if there were poets before Homer, there were certainly story-tellers before Herodotus. That we do not know by name authors of stories is not surprising; the best stories are always anonymous. Those who told them must have been many; but not everyone could tell a story. It required skill, training and memory — exactly those qualities needed for the old epic ἀοιδός. But while the epic bard had catered for court and aristocracy, the story-teller had for his audience groups of ordinary people gathered in the market-place. Here he would tell tales of distant lands and strange peoples, Pygmies, Amazons, Hyperboreans, of savage monsters on sea and land, of all the marvellous things that only happen in far-off lands. Many of such tales were very ancient, far older than the *Odyssey*. For generations back they must have been told repeatedly before they were ever written down; and so the story-tellers, like the bards, gradually perfected a technique of narrative, far less formal and artificial than the technique of epic but more suitable for the less sophisticated audience. Now politically the common people had been gaining ground everywhere at the expense of the aristocracy. By the sixth century democracy or tyranny was the usual form of government in Ionian cities and islands, and the tyrant was usually sprung from the common people. In such communities the people's story-teller would receive some recognition. Literature, as we saw in Part II, was no longer the private possession of an aristocracy, but welcomed the popular tales. We have already seen that use was made of them in iambic poetry; now apparently they came to be written down as they were spoken, in a simple straightforward style without subordinate clauses or rhetorical embellishment. This is the *λέξις εἰρομένη* of Ionian prose, the only narrative prose style in Greek before the artistic developments of the sophists. The stock of popular tales received many additions through the oriental peoples with whom the Ionian Greeks were in touch. This is well exemplified in the Fables of Æsop. The animal-fable, like other folk-tales, easily passed from one nation to another. Not only from the lands of Asia Minor but from Egypt and India came fables which were told among the Ionian Greeks. Some may have been written down in Greek iambic verse, but the first-known collection of both Greek and Oriental fables was made in prose [5] by Æsopus in the sixth century. This famous book has not come down to us in its original form nor even in the late fourth-century adaptation of Demetrius of Phalerum; we only know the work of iambic writers such as Babrius (third century A.D.) in Greek and Phædrus in Latin. Thus we are deprived of the chance of studying Ionic story-telling before Herodotus.

---

[3] On his elegiac poem *Lyde*, his most famous work, see Pt.II. p. 102.

---

[4] See T. R. Glover, *Herodotus*, p. 23.

Myth and History in Prose

The subject of the earliest prose writings was *ἱστορίη* "enquiry." This enquiry might be made into past events — history; into the present state of the world — geography; or into the past and present operations of nature, the creation and working of the universe — science. The earliest historical work known to us is that of Cadmus of Miletus. He is little more than a name, but in another Milesian, Hecatæus, we have one of the important figures in the history of human thought. He was called by Herodotus (ii. 143) *λογοποιός*, which means simply prose-writer. In point of fact he was both an historian and a geographer. He lived in the most troublous time in the history of his land, the revolt of the Greek cities of Ionia against the Persians, which ended in the capture and sack of Miletus in 494 B.C. The part played by Hecatæus, who at first was opposed to the revolt, is told by Herodotus, but it is uncertain what became of him after 494. We know that he travelled much, making notes of everything he saw and heard, and that his journey to Egypt was made about 525 B.C. His earliest work was the mythico-historical *Genealogies* which opens dogmatically thus:

---

[5] *Herodotus*, ii. 134 and v. 36 calls him *λογοποιός*.

> Here speaks Hecatæus of Miletus. What follows I write as it appears to me to be true; for the writings of the Hellenes are many and in my opinion ridiculous. (Fr. 1.)

Yet Herodotus sometimes laughs at his expense (*e.g.* ii. 23, iv. 36). More important is his geographical work *Periegesis*. It was in two books, one on Europe and the other on Asia, which included Egypt and Libya. Of the 336 fragments of the *Periegesis* (or *Periodos*) the majority are merely the names of places which Stephanus of Byzantium or some other writer mentions, with a reference to Hecatæus, *e.g.* "Patrasus: Pontic city, as Hecatæus says in his *Asia*." But some of the fragments are more informative and give us glimpses of his method and theories. What impresses us most is not that he adheres to the belief that the Nile flows from a southern ocean into the Mediterranean, or that he accepts many features of Homeric geography, such as the river Oceanus flowing round the world; such mistakes were inevitable, and he had no means of testing his knowledge. The significant thing is that he is the first Greek writer to attempt to give a picture of the world as he saw it, not merely the position of the different states, but their fauna and flora, the customs and characteristics of their inhabitants, their laws and religion. He was the first anthropologist as well as the first geographer.

Among other early writers of genealogies are Acusilaus of Argos who wrote a prose version of Hesiod; he is later than Hecatæus but earlier than Pherecydes of Athens who dealt with Attic saga. These writers on the mainland of Greece seem to have done little but re-copy, but in Ionia were written works of more historical value whose loss we deplore; the περσικὰ of Charon of Lampsacus (*c.* 500) and the Lydian history of Xanthus of Sardis (*c.* 465). Scylax of Caryanda (*c.* 495), the explorer of the Indus (Herod. iv. 44), was also a historian, and Dionysius of Miletus (fifth century) wrote a history of the Persian Wars. Though he actually outlived Herodotus by some twenty years, it will be convenient to mention here Hellanicus of Lesbos (Mytilene) whose voluminous works included a history of Attica down to 411 [6] which was known to Thucydides (i. 97). All these early prose writers, whatever their country of origin, wrote in the Ionic dialect, or more correctly, they learned and used the narrative prose technique of the Ionian story-teller.

Herodotus

Herodotus was born in Halicarnassus about 485 B.C., but spent part of his early life in Samos, which island always had a high place in his affections. He lived for some time too at Athens and there enjoyed the friendship of the poet Sophocles. He may have returned to Halicarnassus and helped to expel the tyrant Lygdamis, who had probably been the cause of his departure. He took part along with Athenians in the foundation of the colony at Thurii in South Italy (443) and died either there or at Athens about 425 B.C. Thus, while he has many hard things to say of the Athenians,[7] he admired them and lived much among them and doubtless owed much to literary circles there. The chronology of these events is uncertain, as is also that of his travels in Scythia, Egypt and the rest of the Persian Empire. His work cannot be said to have been written in any one of the places in which he lived; its composition probably extended over a long period, additions being made from time to time. But there is not evidence to show, as some have maintained,[8] that the later books were written first, still less that the work was given to the world piecemeal.[9] He may well, however, have collected much of his geographical and ethnographical material before he conceived the idea of an historical work on Greeks and Barbarians.

---

[6] See C. F. Lehmann-Haupt in *Gercke-Norden*,^{2} vol. 3. p. 88.

[7] See especially Bk. viii. *passim*.

The most important and interesting feature of Herodotus' life is the length and variety of his journeys. His recorded observations show such a lively interest in the products of the different lands and their means of transport and trading that it is a reasonable supposition that on some of his journeys [10] he travelled as a merchant. At any rate we hear of no other kind of employment which would have taken him so far afield. Nor does he appear to have had a large private fortune. Apart from visits to Greece and the Ægean islands he travelled in Asia Minor and knew Sardis. He visited Babylon and Susa, not by the famous Royal Road which he knows only at second hand (v. 53), but first by sea, then across Syria. He coasted along the south side of the Black Sea to Colchis (iv. 86) and on another occasion took the western and northern coastal route to Scythia. He visited Egypt, probably more than once. He went inland to Memphis and the Pyramids (ii. 125) and even as far south as Thebes and Elephantine. Among other places he is known to have visited Tyre (ii. 44) and Cyrene (Bk. iv.). Besides Thurii he visited other cities of South Italy and Sicily. Wherever he went he took note not only of the active life of the country but of tombs, statues and monuments, relics of battles, temple-offerings, of all that we should call monumental and archæological evidence. The notes which he made in the course of his journeys are the material of much of his history. He recorded both what he saw himself and what he heard from others. The trustworthiness of his informants must have varied greatly. Among the Persians he seems to have met learned and cultivated people, but in Egypt he was not always so fortunate. In both places he must have been hampered by his ignorance of all languages but Greek. Though he was not more gullible than most travellers, his informants must often have told him just what they thought he would like to hear, and a few minutes' conversation must have sufficed to tell them that what Herodotus most liked to hear was a good story.[11] Of course he was not so unintelligent as to believe all that was told him, but he deemed it his duty to record it.

---

[8] *E.g.* Macan, Wells. But the long digression in Bk. ii. on Egypt may have been added later.

[9] F. Jacoby in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopadie*, Suppl. ii. col. 330.

[10] But not his Egyptian journeys, which were probably made late in life and where he appears rather as a tourist.

> I am bound to say what was said to me, but I am certainly not bound to believe it. This remark I would have you apply to all my history. (vii. 152.)

While much of Herodotus' information is drawn from his own observations and what he heard by word of mouth, he must often have used written evidence. He examined and had translated certain official documents of the Persians, *e.g.* for the organization of Darius' empire (iii. 89–97) and the Royal Road (v. 52–53). He made frequent use of records preserved in temples, collections of oracles and lists of officials. With his predecessors in historical and geographical writing he can hardly have been unacquainted, but the only prose writer mentioned by name is Hecatæus. The works of Xanthus of Sardis, Dionysius of Miletus and Charon of Lampsacus ought to have been most useful to him, but there is no evidence that he made any use of them. Hellanicus' *Attic History* and other works were probably too late for him to have known them; but about his debt to Hecatæus there can be no question. It is impossible, however, to gauge its extent accurately. Hecatæus is only four times mentioned by name, once (vi. 137) to disagree with him on an historical point, once to tell with relish a story in which Hecatæus' family pride receives a blow at the hands of Egyptian priests (ii. 143), and twice (v. 36 and 125) to mention with approval his conduct in the Ionian revolt. There are other passages in which he is fairly certainly criticizing the geographical notions of Hecatæus (see above, p. 156), and there are doubtless other places where he uses Hecatæus and agrees with him; for it is likely enough that wherever he went he took with him the *Periegesis* as a guide-book and made corrections in it as he found necessary. Where he followed it, he made no acknowledgment; literary etiquette did not require it. Other literary sources for Herodotus are the poets both epic and lyric. They are mentioned freely by name, especially Homer. He must have known the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* almost by heart. In Æschylus' *Persæ* (472 B.C.) there is an almost contemporary account of Salamis which he must have disregarded since it is so different from his own.

---

[11] Some of the stories he heard on his travels (*e.g.* the βέκος story, Bk. ii. 2) were really Ionian folk-tales. It is an old device of story-tellers, deliberate or unconscious, to set the scene in distant lands.

Such briefly was the kind of material which Herodotus collected, on the whole the best evidence that could be obtained. His attitude towards that evidence cannot be stated briefly or simply since it varied with the nature of the case and, one might almost say, the mood of the author; moreover, he acted as we have seen on the principle of recording everything without thereby committing himself to believing it. He is inclined to suspect miraculous occurrences when they seem to him physically impossible; but he accepts oracles and omens as the normal means of communication between gods and men, while dreams play nearly as important a part as they do in the *Iliad.* He does not as a rule question the authority of Homer and the mythological poets but he does distinguish between the dim past of mythology, when men, like Minos, *may* have lived, and the historical period when they certainly did. He is anxious to discover the truest tradition, but he is better at collecting evidence than sifting it. When confronted with alternative versions of a story he often simply leaves the reader to choose between them. Other times he is certain he is right, mentions the alternative version and gives reasons for rejecting it. For example he rejects, as one of the "many unintelligent stories of Greeks," the tale of the Egyptians who tried to slay Heracles as an offering to Zeus; he let them continue till they reached the altar, when he turned and slew them all. "By telling such a story," says Herodotus, "the Greeks only show their utter ignorance of the character and customs of the Egyptians" (ii. 45). At other times he frankly admits that the data are insufficient to form a conclusion. He "cannot find out for certain" who stole Mardonius' body (ix. 84). Again, "and he (Cleomenes) said to them, whether lying or speaking the truth, I cannot definitely say; anyhow he said . . ." (vi. 82).

With these materials and methods Herodotus wrote his famous work "of researches"[12] which begins with these words:

> The researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus are here set forth, in order that past events may not through lapse of time be lost to mankind and lest the great and wonderful achievements whether of Greeks or barbarians be unremembered, in particular the causes which brought them to war with each other.

If we bear these words well in mind, we shall be less likely to misconceive the nature and purpose of the book. In the first place he calls his work *ἱστορίης ἀπόδειξις*, "a setting forth of his enquiry," not, like Thucydides' Peloponnesian War, a *συγγραφή*, "historical narrative." Secondly, he wishes, like the epic poets, to preserve the past for its own sake, not, like Thucydides or Livy, to provide examples for the future. Thirdly, the past history of the barbarians is of equal importance with that of the Greeks. Lastly, the clash between Greece and Persia was the ultimate object of his enquiry. It will be seen at once that this scheme allows him great latitude. He was not concerned merely with the invasions of Greece by Darius and Xerxes but with the whole history of the relations between Greece and her barbarian neighbours, the differences between them in customs, outlook and religion. Hence the work is, as he freely admits,[13] full of long and short digressions and additional episodes — another mark of kinship between Herodotus and the epic poets.

---

[12] *ἱστορίη* only once (vii. 96) means "history."

The work as we have it is divided into nine books, named after the nine Muses. This division is the work of Alexandrian scholars; it is intelligently made and convenient to use, but it would be impossible to summarize briefly the subject-matter of each book. Moreover, such a summary would give quite a wrong impression of unity and coherence and no conception at all of the charm and variety of the work. For however much we may have to criticize the historian, there always remains the undisputed fact that the Histories of Herodotus are among the most delightful things in literature. The charm lies partly in the man himself. His good humour and kindliness, his willingness to believe the best, his open and receptive mind, his love of a good story, his complete freedom from malice and boredom, all these together with a quick eye and an easy narrative style have combined to make a book which even the most sophisticated cannot but enjoy. They will also be impressed by his broad-mindedness, his freedom from that narrowness of outlook which life in a Greek city-state tended to produce. Herodotus' native city, Halicarnassus, was always a centre of Persian influence, and Herodotus from his earliest youth had been acquainted with Persian manners and ideas and had learned to know their worth. He does not sneer at them because they differed from the Greeks; it never occurs to him not to give them credit when it is due to them. This sane toleration aroused the indignation of more bigoted Greeks and is one of the most pleasing features of his work. These and other characteristics of the writer will be better illustrated by an examination of a few parts of the work than by a description of the whole.

Book i. is concerned mainly with the early history of the Persians. Its opening provides an instructive example of the way in which Herodotus worked. It is taken from Greek mythology,[14] but it purports to give the views of Persian historians about the origin of the enmity between Greece and barbarians. They are made to trace it back to the carrying off of Io from Argos by Phœnicians; the Greeks retaliated by carrying off Europa from Tyre. Then they took Medea from Colchis, so Paris took Helen; after which the Greeks took all they could in Asia and were chiefly responsible for the hatred; moreover, it was sheer folly on their part to go to war to recover a woman, since "it was quite evident, that if the women hadn't wanted to go, they would not have been carried off" (i. 4). The nameless Persians who presented this case against the Greeks are thus credited with a knowledge of Greek mythology which Herodotus often ascribes both to Persians (vi. 54, vii. 150) and Egyptians (ii. 91). Whether he had any warrant for this or not, at all events the famous remark about the Rape of Io and of Helen bears all the marks of having been made by a Persian laughing at the Greeks. Herodotus took the joke in good part, but Plutarch was very angry about it.[15] What is significant for us is that Herodotus thought it worth while to look for the causes of the war, not in political rivalry but in the ancient moral guilt of one side or the other. As for his own view, he merely says:

---

[13] iv. 30, vii. 171, etc.

> Thus say the Persians and Phœnicians, but I am not going to say that these things took place either in this or in any other way, but will tell of the man who, I know, first ill-used the Greeks. (i. 5.)

So he passes to Crœsus of Lydia. Then follows an account of the Lydian Empire (i. 6–94), with a valuable digression (59–64) on the tyranny of Pisistratus. Crœsus, like many of the tyrants of Greece, made gifts to the Delphic Oracle. Herodotus saw Crœsus' offerings there and knew that some of them were falsely ascribed to the Spartans. He knows who was responsible for the forgery but he will not say (51). In Herodotus' account Crœsus is saved from the burning pyre made by Cyrus. Here is a good example of Herodotus' love of the story in history, particularly a story with a touch of the marvellous. It also illustrates his non-committal attitude and his weakness in character-drawing. Three possible motives which may have led Cyrus to burn Crœsus are set out:

---

[14] A good example of attempt to rationalize myth into history.

[15] Plutarch (?), *De Malign. Herodoti*, 11 (*Moralia*, 856 f.).

> He may have intended him to be an offering to some god, the first-fruits of his conquest, or it was in fulfilment of a vow, or else, knowing Crœsus to be a god-fearing man, he wished to find out if any of the gods would save him from being burned alive.[16]

Now the third of these motives is merely an inference from the story in which Apollo in the end rescues Crœsus; but there is nothing in Cyrus' conduct to suggest that he was expecting this. He merely changed his mind, and that too late for human hands to extinguish the fire, because he was impressed by Crœsus quoting the words of Solon, "Count no man happy among the living." Herodotus only added the third motive because it appealed to him personally. Psychologically therefore he is at fault. He has misjudged the character of Cyrus and his account of Crœsus is inconsistent. Crœsus was first introduced to us as an oriental despot who did much harm to the Greeks (*ch.* 5; cp. 92 *fin.*). Here he appears rewarded for his piety by a Greek god. It may be argued that such a position is quite tenable, but the fact remains that Herodotus' method, attractive though it be for the reader, still leaves us with a Crœsus who has one foot in legend and the other in history.

His insight and observation are much better when he is telling of the habits of peoples as a whole. He shows especial interest in their daily life, in particular their methods of trading and transport. His visit to Babylon produced many *θωύματα*. Here is his account of boats on the Euphrates:

> The most interesting thing of all, I thought, next to

---

[16] i. 86.

> the city itself, I will now tell. The boats which go down the river to Babylon are circular and all made of skins. Among the Armenians above Assyria they cut strips of willow and over them they stretch hides on the outside to make the boat's bottom; they do not make any distinction of stern or narrow a bow, but make it circular like a shield. They line the whole vessel with straw, load it with cargo and set it afloat down stream. . . . It is steered by two paddles, worked by two men who stand upright; one draws his paddle towards him, while the other pushes his away from him. . . . In each ship there is a live donkey, in the larger ones several. When they have reached Babylon and disposed of their cargo, they sell by auction the willow strips and all the straw, but they pack the hides on the donkeys and drive them back to Armenia. The boats cannot possibly go up stream owing to the speed of the river; that is why they do not make their boats of wood but of skins.[17]

Of many digressions the longest is that on Egypt (Bk. ii.). Here Herodotus has some interesting observations on his own sources. At the beginning of chapter 99 he says:

> Down to this point what has been said is the result of my own observation, opinion or enquiry; in what follows I shall record Egyptian reports as I heard them, with the addition also of a certain amount of my own observation.

What follows down to chapter 146 is mainly an account of Egyptian history. At 147 he is careful to inform us that for the rest he will be using a combination of Egyptian and other sources as well as his own observation. Thus the last part of the book deals with Greeks and Egyptians under the Saite dynasty. The most curious part of this book is chapters 35–98. Herodotus claims that the customs of the Egyptian are so unusual that they merit the digression. Egypt he finds to be a kind of topsy-turvy land where they do everything the opposite way to everybody else. His account, it need hardly be said, is not always strictly accurate, yet Egyptologists have given it much praise, and the comparisons between Greek and Egyptian religions are very valuable, not least when they are incorrect. Egyptian religion, which, like his geography, is made to appear too uniform and systematic, is for him quite as genuine as Greek, and of course far more ancient. Not unnaturally, therefore, he is inclined to find Egyptian origins for much of Greek religion.[18] Even the worship of Dionysus is ascribed to them. Some of his observations on animals in Egypt are curious and not always credible; but it is to be remembered that he did not necessarily believe them all himself. He describes with varying accuracy the crocodile, the hippopotamus, and the phœnix, of which bird he admits that he only saw pictures. He gives a careful description of the two kinds of ibis, which is sacred to the Egyptians because every spring they attack and kill invading winged snakes from Arabia (ch. 75).

---

[17] i. 194. For Egyptian methods see ii. 96.

Egypt provided Herodotus with some of his best popular tales. King Rhampsinitus (ch. 121) had built a treasure-chamber in which to store his vast wealth, but the builder who made it had deliberately left a loose stone in an exterior wall. While he lived he kept his secret, but on his death-bed revealed it to his two sons, who, unable to restrain their greed, soon identified the stone by the measurements given, and every night took away some of the treasure. The king set a trap in which one of the brothers was caught. The other, lest he should be recognized, cut off his head and took it home. The king had the headless body exposed under a guard in the hope that some relative might come and mourn by it. This the mother of the men threatened to do and to reveal the guilt of her other son, unless he could bring her his brother's corpse. Having made the guards drunk by a careful ruse the builder's son secures the body. The king has recourse to another means, which Herodotus says he does not believe. He made his daughter question all her suitors about the cleverest and wickedest thing they had ever done; if she suspected any, she was to seize him and detain him. In due course the ambitious son of the builder came and, eager to impress her with his cleverness, revealed his story. But under his coat he had concealed his dead brother's arm and this he let the princess grasp, while he himself escaped. The king so admired his cleverness that instead of punishing him he gave him his daughter's hand.

---

[18] He was much less interested in Persian religion, which was far less akin to the anthropomorphism of the Greek.

This version of one of the best-known folk-tales of the nations is interesting for itself and for the student of *Märchen*. Not less valuable are the travellers' tales of which Books iv. and v. are especially full. Nowhere is Herodotus more in his element than in describing far-off, half-real peoples in Scythia — Agathynians, Man-eaters, Blackcoats, the people of an unidentified town Gelonus who were partly Greek and partly a powerful "red and blue" race, red hair presumably and blue eyes, or is it some distant rumour of woad? If the geography of Book iv. (which also includes an account of Cyrene in Africa) is confused, its interest for the reader and value for the anthropologist are very great. Here is an early reference to the werewolf superstition:

> The Neuri are of the same civilization as the Scythians; but a generation before Darius' expedition they had to abandon all their territory on account of snakes. . . . Finally they went to live with the Budini. These Neuri are probably magicians; for Scythians and Greeks living in Scythia say that once a year each of the Neuri becomes a wolf for a few days and returns again to his proper shape. In saying this they do not convince me, but they say it none the less and swear to it. (iv. 105.)

With such pieces of folk-lore, anecdotes and marvels, the work of Herodotus is filled and it is on such that its popularity largely rests. But we must not forget that he is an historian. His last four books are our chief source of information about the Ionian Revolt and the Persian Wars. Marathon, Thermopylæ, Salamis and Platæa, the most famous chapter in Greek history, will always be best read in the pages of Herodotus. Yet even here our historian is still a story-teller, collecting a bit of scandal about the Alcmæonidæ, fantastic tales of Xerxes' host drinking rivers dry, moralizing about his scourging and branding of the sea. It is true that even these are important for the historian, showing as they do what people thought and believed at the time, but it must be admitted that Herodotus' account of the two Persian campaigns is full of puzzles both for the student of strategy and the chronologist. Thus while he is careful to inform us that the Persians brought cavalry and landed them at Marathon because the plain there was suitable for them, he does not tell us what part they played in the battle. In the campaign of 480 he does not realize the interdependence of the naval operations off Artemisium and the stand at Thermopylæ. Nor is his account of Salamis convincing in detail. His chronology is as weak as his military history, and weaker in Greek than in Persian events. He probably consulted more and better Persian official records than Greek. He must have been hampered by the fact that the Greeks had no universally accepted means of dating,[19] except to say "after the Trojan War." Hence Herodotus had to take his information as he found it — in years or seasons or days, generations of men or even Athenian archonships.

There has been much dispute about Herodotus' religious convictions. By a selection of passages it can be shown that he was a sincerely pious and religious man, for whom the gods were all-important, punishing the guilty and rewarding the righteous; but it is also possible by another selection to maintain that he was a rationalist and a sceptic, strongly influenced by the current questioning and speculation. Sometimes he sees the hand of the gods punishing evil (vii. 134), yet at another time he prefers to say that the glen of Peneus was formed by an earthquake than to say in the old-fashioned way "Poseidon did it." The truth is perhaps that Herodotus, while greatly interested in religion, belonged to that large band of persons who cannot make up their minds how much they believe. As Herodotus says about one of his stories: "I neither disbelieve nor entirely believe" (iv. 96).

---

[19] The practice of making the Olympic Games, which took place every four years, serve as a chronological yard-stick, dates only from late in the fourth century B.C. But his contemporary Hellanicus had a system based on the list of priestesses of Hera at Argos.

However, neither his uncertainty in chronology nor his weakness in military science nor his lack of rigidity in religious belief will interfere with the enjoyment of most of Herodotus' readers, who will listen readily to anything he tells, whether believing it or not. They will find him sometimes sceptical, sometimes pious, sometimes flippant, sometimes serious, often garrulous but never wearisome. They will not find him one of the world's greatest men, but one of the most engaging and delightful writers.

Religious and Philosophical Literature

Turning back again to the sixth century and to the beginnings of philosophical literature we are once more struck by the long-continued life of the epic hexameter. New types of literature had sprung up with new forms and metres; but theology and cosmology had, like legend and history, always been subjects for epic verse and even in the fifth century Empedocles is still using it. Unfortunately some of the early Greek thinkers have left no remains either in verse or prose, and our knowledge of sixth-century thought, which is essential for the understanding of the Greek spirit, is far from complete. There were, however, two main currents: the growing spirit of scientific enquiry which we have already seen at work, but which must now be examined in its relation to religion and cosmology, and secondly the leaning towards mystery religions. In theology these two movements both represent discontent with the Olympian theocracy, but there was not and could not be any kind of alliance between, since they represented directly opposite attitudes towards religion. In its extreme form the conflict between the two was none other than that between science and religion; but the Greeks were not given to violent and bitter religious disputes; for one thing, there was no priestly caste desirous of defending vested interests. Their philosophers too were free from bigotry, and some, like Empedocles and Plato, were strongly impressed by the mystery religions, while the philosophy of the Pythagorean school was so closely allied with Orphism that it is often impossible to distinguish them.

A mystery religion differed from the official state-religion first by its secrecy; the rites were known to and witnessed by only those who had been initiated; secondly, the rites themselves were not offerings to a god to induce him to bestow a favour but were intended to bring the worshipper into communion with the divinity and to allow him to partake of that divinity either by eating and drinking his flesh and blood or by witnessing scenes of his divine life and sufferings. The two chief mystery religions were those of Demeter at Eleusis and those of the Orphic Dionysus. To the literature of the former reference has already been made.[20] The followers of the Orphic sect were especially active in the sixth century B.C., when they seem to have conducted a kind of religious revival and gathered disciples among the common people. Their teaching offered them consolation for the ills of this life by a hope of future blessedness. Into the question whether Orphism came to Greece from the East or the West we cannot enter here, but it is likely that some of its ideas were not so foreign to Greek religion as used to be thought. At all events it was a good deal older than any Orphic *literature* that we possess. This literature, of which we know little for the early period, is associated with the names of Epimenides of Crete (*c.* 600) and Onomacritus of Athens (*c.* 510) the "oracle-monger" who was exiled by Hippias. These writers did for the Orphic mysteries what the author of the *Hymn to*

---

[20] It may be permitted here to remind the reader of the uncertainty in dating the poems known as the "Homeric" Hymns.

Demeter did for the Eleusinian; they told the myth of Dionysus-Zagreus on which their mysteries depended. But in order to give a greater antiquity to their religion they ascribed the myth to a certain Orpheus who was older than Homer. Whether Orpheus ever existed at all may be doubted, but Plato at least regarded him along with Homer as a genuine ancient poet.

This religious revival, however, did not win the day. If the battle was won at all it was won by the spirit of scientific enquiry; this does not mean that the teaching of any of the enquirers met with general acceptance, but at least the early philosophers laid the foundations of free unfettered discussion of the nature of the universe and of existence and of our means of knowing it. It began as we should expect in Ionia, where Thales of Miletus, one of the Seven Wise Men, predicted the solar eclipse of 28 May 585 B.C. His knowledge of mathematics and astronomy was probably due to Babylonian sources. In philosophy he is the first of the Monists. There was one primeval substance, so we are told, water, from which all things were created. However worthless this bald statement of his theories by a later writer, it is noteworthy that a departure has been made from the old anthropomorphic ideas of Hesiod's *Theogony:* "Of Chaos were born Erebos and black Night." Next Anaximander postulated the existence of a stuff which he called "the unlimited," which without being a mixture of earth, air, fire and water was capable of producing them. Anaximenes supposed air to be the primary stuff. These three Milesians had less importance for future developments than the "dark" philosopher (ὁ σκοτεινὸς) Heraclitus of Ephesus. Like the other Ionian Monists he had his primary substance — fire: but he is interesting as giving us the first attempt at a theory of existence: existence was a harmony between two opposites; but this harmony was not static; there was continual motion between air at one extreme and earth at the other with water in between; hence everything in the universe was in a state of flux, πάντα ῥεῖ, all things flow. Meanwhile quite a different line of thought was being pursued in South Italy, whither

Pythagoras had removed from his native Samos. Pythagoras was a brilliant mathematician and seems to have arrived at some account of the universe in terms of numbers. He believed in gods — good, moral gods — like whom men should try to be. The soul was immortal and was temporarily imprisoned in the body, which was a hindrance to its realization of ὁμοίωσις with the gods. The soul might equally well occupy the body of an animal as a man. The followers of Pythagoras formed themselves into a semi-religious band of disciples with many points of resemblance to the Orphics.

In Xenophanes of Colophon (*c.* 540) we have a theologian of a very different kind and the first of the philosophical writers whose remains are sufficient to allow him to be considered as a poet. About 120 lines have survived, partly in hexameters, partly in elegiacs. He is credited too with historical epics on the foundation of Colophon and the colonization of Elea in South Italy. His chief works were *On Nature* and a collection of critical verse (hexameters) known as Σίλλοι. He was a theologian and a preacher whose conception of the gods differed entirely from the anthropomorphic.

> "There is one god," he says, "greatest among gods and men, not like to mortals either in form or mind. . . . He is all sight, all hearing, all understanding. . . . Mortals imagine that gods are born, that they have clothing, speech and form like theirs; but if oxen or lions or horses had hands to draw with and could do the things man does, then horses would have drawn forms of gods like to horses, oxen forms like oxen, and would have made their bodies exactly like their own. . . . Homer and Hesiod attributed to the gods all the sins and wickedness of mankind, theft, adultery and cheating."[21]

Thus Xenophanes is the first theologian to demand that the gods should have an ethical value. In his morality he is quite in accord with Hesiod:

---

[21] Fragments of σίλλοι and περὶ φύσεως. H. Diels: *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker,*^{4} 23, 24, 14, 15.

> But right-minded men should first honour God with song, in tales that are not blasphemous and words that are pure. They should make libation and pray that they may have power to do the right; for that is better far.[22]

This striking and original thinker awakened no response; the orthodox condemned him as irreligious; his appeal for an alliance between religion and morality fell on deaf ears and later antiquity remembered him chiefly as a poet of satirical vein.

Parmenides (c. 500)

More important in the history of philosophy but less interesting as literature is Parmenides of Elea. His work, which is in hexameter verse, is in two parts, *Truth* (*τὰ πρὸς ἀλαθείαν*) and *Opinion* (*τὰ πρὸς δόξαν*). In the *Truth* he combats the notions of Heraclitus that everything moves. In his theory of existence only *τὸ ὂν* exists. That which changes cannot be said to exist, it only becomes; therefore only "that which is *τὸ ὂν* really exists." *τὸ ὂν* is immovable, unchangeable, everlasting, homogeneous; it is the only object of knowledge. We have of course no sense-perception of this; sense-perception has no value for Parmenides. He arrived at his theory of existence not by using his senses but by his brain, his intelligence, his powers of reasoning. Herein lies his chief importance; along with his fellow-Eleatic Zeno he laid the foundations of logic or dialectic, the instrument of thought perfected by Plato. It is not clear what is the purpose of the *τὰ πρὸς δόξαν*. Here Parmenides seems either to be satirizing the opinions which depended on sense-perception or else to be giving his genuine *opinion* about the universe without claiming that it is *true*.

Empedocles (c. 480–420)

The greatest of the early philosophical poets was Empedocles of Agrigentum. In philosophy he is the first of the pluralists. He postulated not one primeval substance but four "roots," earth, air, fire, water; the universe was governed by two forces, Love and Hate: when love vanquished hate, perfect harmony resulted, and when hate shall vanquish love, chaos will result. On the poetry of Empedocles the verdict of Aristotle[23] is "Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common save metre; therefore it is right to call the former a poet, the latter a physicist rather than a poet." This is too harsh; Aristotle was prejudiced; he had no opinion of Empedocles as a philosopher (*Rhet.*, 1407 *a*). Over 300 lines of his περὶ φύσεως survive, and considering the nature of the subject it cannot be denied that they show both technical skill and poetic merit. Only Lucretius, who had unbounded admiration for him (i. 716–733) is his superior in this kind of poem; but if his achievement is less than that of the Latin poet, it is partly because his task was less difficult. He had no need to create a new technique of expression, the philosophical epic was a well-established tradition. But Empedocles comes nearer to Homer and writes with more inspiration than the rest. There is something of Homer's skill in the following passage, in which he sought to explain the nature of the human eye:

---

[22] Elegiac fragment, Diels 1. 11.

> As when one who planned to go forth on a winter night, prepared a light and kindled the flame of bright fire, a lantern protected from all the winds; it put to flight the breath of the winds that blow, while the flame inside went leaping through, for it was of finer texture, and flickered round the lantern-door with unquenchable beams; even so the primeval fire, wrapped in a fine covering of membranes pierced with wondrous small holes, held in a trap the round pupil. (Fr. 84 Diels.)

In addition to his physical work Empedocles wrote a religious poem, "Purifications" (καθαρμοί). It owes much to the Orphics and Pythagoras for whom he has great admiration. (Fr. 129 D.)

---

[23] *Poet.* 1447 *a.*

Philosophy in Prose

Meanwhile other speculative philosophers had discarded the epic guise. Anaxagoras of Clazomenæ, who first postulated intelligence (*νοῦς*) as a moving cause, wrote a very plain unadorned prose:

> These things being so, we must believe that in all composite things, there are many and various things, *seeds* of all things having all manner of shapes, colours and charms;

— a doctrine summed up in the phrase "there is something of everything in everything." He spent much of his later life at Athens, and at the age of about seventy he was convicted on a charge of impiety and banished. Then came the Atomists, Leucippus and Democritus. But the development of Greek Prose owes nothing to the physicists.[24] Already other thinkers were turning their attention to more humane subjects. Instead of seeking to explain the universe, philosophers began to study life, literature and language. Many of them gave lessons in their subjects and took fees for their instruction. Such philosophers received the name Sophist (*σοφιστής*). The word itself simply meant "expert" or professional teacher; but the acceptance of a fee was in the eyes of many degrading, and the world early acquired a derogatory colour. This was greatly increased by the bitter attacks of Plato, who, conscious that he himself and his master Socrates were in many respects sophists themselves, was at pains to dissociate himself from them. He rightly found fault with the blatant self-advertisement, the exorbitant fees and extravagant promises which were the marks of the less reputable sophist. The modern unfavourable associations of the words sophist and sophistry have another origin; they refer to subtle dialectic and mere cleverness in argument. Now Socrates more than any other sophist employed dialectic as a means of philosophical investigation. As the later schoolmen degraded the art of Albertus and Thomas Aquinas, so the successors of Socrates degraded the art of dialectic or eristic. These fourth-century sophists were attacked by Aristotle, who objected to the dialectic method and to whom our evil associations of "sophist" and "sophistry" are largely due. Here however we have to deal with the fifth-century sophists, the professional teachers.

---

[24] Except perhaps to Democritus who is said to have written on beauty of words and on correct speech.

Most of the sophists left no written works and our knowledge of them is mostly second-hand. To make matters worse it is drawn largely from their bitterest opponents, Plato and Aristophanes. Yet their importance in the history of literature is very great, especially for the study of prose style in philosophy, history and oratory. The word sophist did not imply any particular kind of teaching. Some, like Protagoras and Prodicus, were chiefly professors of literature and language. The Hippocratean circle made a study of medicine. Some, like Hippias, were polymaths and professed to teach all arts and sciences in a manner suitable for all. Others were professors of logic or dialectic and claimed that skill in argument was a prerequisite for any knowledge. Lastly, and most important, the professors of rhetoric earned a rich harvest at Athens by teaching public speaking, both forensic and political, and while so doing laid the foundations of Greek prose style. All these sophists professed to teach ἀρετή, "goodness," which might mean simply proficiency in the subject taught and not necessarily goodness in the moral sense.

Protagoras (c. 500–c. 430)

Protagoras was born in Abdera, a city in Thrace which, although its inhabitants were proverbial for their stupidity, was the mother of more than one philosopher. Here he knew Democritus; but most of his life he spent as an itinerant teacher, making long and frequent visits to Athens. In his old age he fell a victim to one of the sudden outbursts of Athenian intolerance and was banished from the city. He was chiefly, but by no means solely, a professor of language and literature. In Protagoras for the first time we have a Greek who is conscious of his own language and considers it to be an object worthy of study. His method was not historical, still less did he consider the dialectal differences; his aim was to find out what was correct; he studied Homer's language and found fault with it in syntax and in the gender of nouns. In grammar he classified speech correctly into Wish, Question, Answer (*i.e.* Statement) and Command. In addition to his work on Correct Speech he is said to have dealt with Politics, Ambition, Excellences, Things wrongly done by Men, and to have written a metaphysical work of which the title is uncertain. Its opening words were: "Man is the measure of all things; of things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not." As we have it thus isolated, this famous remark is capable of various interpretations. It certainly does not mean "Every man is a law unto himself." Probably it had no moral significance but was a reminder that all scientific observations are made by man and in all our knowledge there is inevitably a fallible human element. Lastly we have the fragment (No. 4 Diels) which led to his banishment from Athens for impiety:

> About the gods I can know nothing, neither that they are nor that they are not. For there are many obstacles to our knowledge, especially the obscurity of things and the brevity of human life.

Making allowance for some caricature and exaggeration, the account of Protagoras contained in Plato's dialogue of that name shows us that he was greatly admired and almost venerated by his followers and contemporaries. It is clear too that he did not like the question-and-answer method of education favoured by Socrates but preferred to deliver lectures on his own lines. But neither Plato's dialogue, important though it is for the piece of literary criticism of Simonides, nor the very scanty fragments of Protagoras himself can suffice to give us any idea of his *literary* importance. The same is true of Prodicus of Ceos who studied the meanings of words and collected synonyms. Their influence came, like that of many sophists, not from what they wrote but from what they taught. There can be no doubt that these two, Protagoras and Prodicus, and others like them set people thinking about how they spoke and the words they used. They created a feeling of self-consciousness about language, which comes out strongly in the dramatist Euripides and which paved the way for the conscious artistry of classical Greek prose.

Hippias

None of the sophists had so wide a range of knowledge as Hippias of Elis. He attained eminence as a teacher of mathematics and of rhythm but was equally expert in the theory of Art, in moral philosophy and in chronology and mnemonics. He was moreover a poet and wrote dithyrambs, epics and tragedies. More surprising still, he was skilled in all kinds of manual work and is said to have appeared one day at the Olympic Games clad from head to foot in articles made by his own hand. Self-sufficiency (*αὐτάρκεια*) was his aim and he seems to have come very near to attaining it; but such an aim was hardly conducive to the making of a great poet, and perhaps the total loss of his written work is not a matter for great regret.

Antiphon the Sophist

Of greater literary interest is a less famous man, Antiphon the Sophist (not the orator), of whose works we have several passages of quite pleasing prose. If not a profound moralist Antiphon the Sophist was at least a genuine and practical one who believed and taught a plain straightforward morality:

> There is a story that a certain man, seeing another carrying away a large sum of money, asked him to lend him some at interest. The other refused, not being the kind of man to trust anyone or help anyone, and took it away and hid it somewhere. Then someone found out what he had done and stole the money away. Some time after the man who had hidden the money came and found it gone. He was greatly distressed at

his misfortune and that he had not lent the money to the man who had asked him, which would have secured its safety for him and benefited the other. When he met the man who had tried to borrow from him he made a great to do to him about his loss, admitting that he had been wrong and that he was very sorry he had been so disagreeable and hadn't obliged him and so lost all the money. The other told him not to worry, but just to imagine that he had the money and hadn't lost it, and to put a stone in the place where it had been. "For," he said, "when you had it, you made no use of it whatever, and now just imagine that you have not been robbed of anything." [Moral.] When a man has never made and never will make any use of a thing, he will not be a whit worse or better off, whether he has it or not. (Fr. 54 D.)

Socrates (470–399)

Of all the fifth-century thinkers who applied themselves particularly to questions of conduct none can compare with Socrates, the most striking figure of his age. In one respect he ought not to be called one of the sophists, since he was not a professional, gave no regular lectures and charged no fees; but we do him no injustice in so classing him. He was born in Athens about 470 B.C. and, except when military service in Thrace and elsewhere compelled him to be absent, spent his life in Attica. Our knowledge of his teaching — he left no writings — is drawn (1) from Plato who idealized him, (2) from Xenophon who was incapable of fully understanding him, (3) from Aristophanes who caricatured him. Aristotle a century later than Socrates adds something to our knowledge, but the conflicting nature of our evidence makes it difficult to know what Socrates really thought. His daily occupation, enjoined, so he said, by divine command, was to loiter in the streets, market-place and gymnasia engaging his fellow-citizens in conversation, questioning them about their lives and conduct, trying to teach them to think clearly and understand the meaning of the terms which they employed so loosely, and proving to many that they did not know as much as they thought. He probably spoke the truth, if, as Plato [25] tells us, he compared himself to a gadfly goading and irritating people out of sluggish complacency. He was not interested in "physics" (τὰ φυσικά) but in man, in right and wrong, courage and cowardice, justice and injustice, in exact definition and in the pursuit of truth by the method of question and answer. It was his delight to pursue and track down the argument like a quarry and watch into what kind of pass it led him. He was convinced that wrong-doing was due to ignorance and that if men once knew the right, they could not fail to do it. Plato [26] tells us that he was once asked whether he would rather do wrong or suffer it. "I would rather," replied Socrates, "have neither, but if I were obliged either to do wrong or suffer it, I would rather suffer than do it." It is hard to believe that the man who said these words (if he did say them) was put to death by the Athenians when he was seventy years old on a charge of impiety; but one can well believe that so outspoken a critic made many enemies and there may have been political motives behind the accusation. The Athenian democracy, restored in 403, was still in 399 fearful for its own security and intolerant of all criticism and individualism.

Gorgias

That part of the sophistic movement which had the greatest influence on literature was the teaching of rhetoric. It coloured the whole lives of the Athenian people, laid the foundations of Greek prose style and even affected drama. We have already noted the beginnings of self-consciousness in speech and how Protagoras and Prodicus had been making language and literature subjects of education. Meanwhile in Sicily the study of speech had been turned towards different ends. The tyrants of Syracuse, who had been among Pindar's most generous supporters, had been replaced in 466 by a democratic government.

---

[25] *Apology*, 30 *e*.

[26] *Gorgias*, 469 *c*.

The change brought with it numerous disputes over property and land-tenure, and this state of affairs created a demand for knowledge, not so much of the law, as of the best way to collect and present all the evidence in one's favour. This demand was first met by a certain Corax (*floruit* 466) and his pupil Tisias (*fl.* 433) who taught the art of speaking, especially the arrangement of subject-matter in successful pleading. The greatest of the Sicilian rhetoricians, however, was Gorgias of Leontini who was born about 485 and lived well into the fourth century. He is said to have reached the age of 108, and to have returned various and contradictory answers to the busybodies who enquired to what he attributed his longevity. He lived most of his life in his native land but part of his later years were spent at Athens. When in 427 the people of Leontini resolved to send an embassy to Athens to ask for help in a war against Syracuse, they chose Gorgias to head the deputation, a choice which had unforeseen consequences in literature. Good oratory had flourished in Athens before 427. Pericles, to mention no others, was a fluent and impressive speaker of whom it was said: "Persuasion sat upon his lips; no other speaker left his sting behind in his hearers." [27] But the impressiveness of Pericles was partly due to his immense personal influence and partly to the gravity and worth of his matter. Now comes a stranger from Leontini and carries the language-loving Athenians off their feet with an eloquence which was almost independent of the personality of the speaker and the importance of the subject, an eloquence of language itself. Others had striven to make speech correct, Gorgias aimed at making it impressive and exciting.

Gorgias relied for his effects first, or Figures of Speech such as Antithesis, balance of clauses (Parisosis) and assonance (Paromoiosis); second on striking, poetical phraseology; third on Rhythm. Gorgias did not invent any of these but he exploited them. The figures of speech may be observed in other sophists. Antithesis indeed was an ingrained habit of thought among the Greeks, hence a habit of speech too. Again, the use of striking words or of words in an unusual way or position was a mark of choral poetry. Gorgias imported poetic diction into prose. As for rhythm, the musical nature of the Greek language, and their long practice in listening to poetry recited or sung must have accustomed them to hear and mark metrical and rhythmical correspondence wherever it occurred. Had this not been so, had the Athenians had no love of antithesis, of fine language, of rhythm, they would not have listened to Gorgias. But Gorgias exaggerated. He "sowed with the sack." His rhythm is often that of a machine-gun. Thrasymachus of Chalcedon [28] wrote far better and more readable rhythmical prose than he did. Poetic diction in prose is carried to absurd lengths and Aristotle rightly takes Gorgias to task for not distinguishing the two. Only the uneducated imagine that flowery writing is good. The figures of speech are harmless in themselves; antithesis in particular can and should be an aid to clearness, not a trick of oratory; but in Gorgias it runs riot.[29] His pretentious euphuism and staccato style could not be reproduced in English; indeed it is not even necessary to understand a passage in order to observe its effects. In addition to some twenty-five lines of the *Epitaphius* we have shorter fragments of the *Olympicus* and the *Praise of Helen*. The latter contains a typically Gorgian comparison between the power of words over the mind and the power of drugs over the body. In addition to speeches Gorgias wrote a philosophical work *On Nature or Not-being* in which he seems to be satirizing Parmenides. He sought to prove first that nothing exists; second, that even if it did it cannot be grasped by man; third, that even if it could, it could not be conveyed or interpreted to another (Fr. 3 Diels).

---

[27] Eupolis, Fr. 94 Kock.

---

[28] A late fifth-century sophist who wrote a work on *Government*. The style (*v.* Fr. 1 Diels) is markedly antithetic but much less abrupt than Gorgias. The rhythmical correspondence is spread over longer periods and gives no harsh staccato effect. Suidas makes him the *first* writer of rhythmical prose; he appears as a character in the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic* of Plato.

[29] Consider the following passage, from a speech which he delivered on Athenians who fell in battle (Epitaphius):

> *μαρτύρια δὲ τούτων τρόπαια ἐστήσαντο τῶν πολεμίων, Διὸς μὲν ἀγάλματα, ἑαυτῶν δὲ ἀναθήματα, οὐκ ἄπειροι οὔτε ἐμφύτου ἄρεος οὔτε νομίμων ἐρώτων οὔτε ἐνοπλίου ἔριδος οὔτε φιλοκάλου εἰρήνης, σεμνοὶ μὲν πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς τῷ δικαίῳ, ὅσιοι δὲ πρὸς τοὺς τοκέας τῇ θεραπείᾳ, δίκαιοι μὲν πρὸς τοὺς ἀστοὺς τῷ ἴσῳ, εὐσεβεῖς δὲ πρὸς τοὺς φίλους τῇ πίστει · τοιγαροῦν αὐτῶν ἀποθανόντων ὁ πόθος οὐ συναπέθανεν, ἀλλ' ἀθάνατος οὐκ ἐν ἀθανάτοις σώμασι ζῇ οὐ ζώντων.*
>
> (Fr. 6 Diels).

However, the importance of Gorgias lies not in his own writings but in his influence on others. He completely altered, indeed he made, Greek prose style which, pruned of the excesses of Gorgias himself, developed on lines which we shall trace among the orators (see Part V). Historical prose was affected and the influence of Gorgias on Thucydides was very great.[30] Except for Hippocrates (see below) the unaffected Ionic prose of Herodotus was eclipsed. If Herodotus was ὁμηρικώτατος among prose-writers, Gorgias may perhaps be called διθυραμβικώτατος and Thucydides πινδαρικώτατος. But while Gorgias borrowed from poetry, poetry borrowed from Gorgias; the influence of rhetoric on drama was strong. Thus oratory, history and drama were all affected by a man whose surviving fragments give no pleasure to read.

The Hippocratic Collection

No product of fifth-century science is so important as the collection of medical treatises which have come down to us under the name of Hippocrates, who was born in the island of Cos in 460 B.C. and was head of the medical school there. There had been other schools of medicine, notably at Cnidus and Rhodes, but the fame of the great physician raised the Coan group to a position of pre-eminence. The treatises which form the *Corpus Hippocraticum* are not all by Hippocrates nor even by members of his school. Some have been traced to the Cnidan school and the suggestion[31] has much probability that the bulk of the collection came from the remains of the Coan School library. It is thus almost a hopeless task to find out the authors of the different books, but the outstanding merit of some, *e.g. Epidemics* i. and iii., *Prognostic, Regimen in Acute Diseases, On Airs, Waters and Places*, suggest that they are the work of Hippocrates himself. A few are much later but most of the *corpus* is fifth-century work.

---

[30] See pp. 200 and 337.

[31] Of Dr. W. H. S. Jones.

The first and third books of *Epidemics* are Hippocrates' own notes on his cases with the name and address of each patient and a diary of his progress. The observations are careful and intelligent and free from the superstition which was a mark of much of early medicine. It is a striking tribute to the greatness of Hippocrates that this note-book should have been preserved and copied. The *Regimen in Acute Diseases* [32] has more literary interest and, if the virtues of barley-gruel seem exaggerated, at any rate it is instructive to read:

> Yet the art as a whole has a very bad name among laymen, so that there is thought to be no art of medicine at all. Accordingly, since among practitioners there will prove to be so much difference of opinion about acute diseases that the remedies which one physician gives in the belief that they are the best are considered by a second to be bad, laymen are likely to object to such that their art resembles divination; for diviners too think that the same bird, which they hold to be a happy omen on the left, is an unlucky one when on the right, while other diviners maintain the opposite.[33]
>
> (Ch. viii.)

The *Prognostic* included diagnosis, but the ability to forecast the course of a disease was of even greater importance than its classification. It was a means of securing the patient's confidence:

> I hold that it is an excellent thing for a physician to practise forecasting. For if he discover and declare unaided by the side of his patients the present, the

---

[32] The four books entitled *Regimen* (*περὶ διαίτης*) are not Hippocratean.

[33] This and the other Hippocratean passages cited are in the translation of W. H. S. Jones (Loeb Library).

> past and the future, and fill in the gaps in the account given by the sick, he will be the more believed to understand the cases, so that men will confidently entrust themselves to him for treatment. (Ch. 1.)

The treatise *Airs, Waters and Places* is full of interest; it deals with climatic conditions, especially winds, the situation and water of places, and their relation not only to bodily but to mental health:

> Whoever wishes to pursue properly the science of medicine must proceed thus. First, he ought to consider what effects each season of the year can produce; for the seasons are not all alike, but differ widely both in themselves and at their changes. The next point is the hot winds and the cold, especially those that are universal, but also those that are peculiar to each particular region. He must also consider the properties of the waters; for as these differ in taste and weight, so the property of each is far different from that of any other. (Ch. i.)

The latter half of the *Airs, Waters and Places* is rather a work of ethnography than of medicine. Now the literary affinity between Hippocrates and Herodotus is close; both wrote the simple, non-artificial Ionic prose. Here the kinship is especially marked, for Hippocrates discusses the characteristics of European and Asiatic races in a similar way and with a similar attitude to Herodotus.

> Now let me turn to the dwellers on the Phasis. Their land is marshy, hot, wet and wooded; copious, violent rains fall there every season. The inhabitants live in the marshes, and their dwellings are of wood and reeds, built in the water. They make little use of walking in the city and the harbour, but sail up and down in "dug-outs" made from a single log, for canals are numerous. The waters which they drink are hot and stagnant, putrefied by the sun and swollen by the rains. . . . The fruits that grow in this country are all stunted, flabby and imperfect, owing to the excess of water, and for this reason they do not ripen. Much

> fog from the waters envelops the land. For these causes therefore the physique of the Phasians is different from that of other folk. (Ch. xv.)

Whether genuinely Hippocratean or not the *Oath* is one of the most famous pieces in the collection. Presumably the oath was taken by those doctors who became members of the medical association, the Asclepiadæ, to which Hippocrates belonged, but it is difficult to reconcile the clause promising not to take fees for medical teaching with Plato who says[34] that Hippocrates took payment for his lectures. The clause forbidding physicians to operate with the knife but leave it to professional surgeons is without parallel or support in the works of Hippocrates. However that may be, this little piece embodies much of the best medical etiquette:

> Into whatsoever houses I enter, I will enter to help the sick, and I will abstain from all intentional wrongdoing and harm, especially from abusing the bodies of man or woman, bond or free. And whatsoever I shall see or hear in the course of my profession, as well as outside my profession in my intercourse with men, if it be what should not be published abroad, I will never divulge, holding such things to be holy secrets.

Some of the works in the *corpus* in spite of their Ionic language, are not the work of physicians of the Coan or of any school but should rather be classed with sophistic literature. The distinction between doctor and layman was not rigid and there was nothing to prevent a sophist from taking a medical subject for his discourse. The treatises *On the Art*, *On Breaths*, *On the Nature of Man* are not text-books of medicine but essays. The "Art," which in modern times has been variously ascribed to Hippias, to Protagoras and to Prodicus, sets out to define the art of medicine and to defend it against detractors.

The *’Αθηναίων Πολιτεία*

About 424 B.C. some unknown oligarch composed a kind of "open letter" on the Athenian constitution. It is the earliest piece of Attic prose that we possess and has come down to us among the works of Xenophon, where it found a place as a pendant to that writer's *Constitution of Lacedæmon.* It is, however, not by Xenophon. On internal evidence it has been shown to belong to the last quarter of the fifth century but before the oligarchic revolution at Athens in 411. Its author is unknown: he is sometimes called the Old Oligarch, since the pamphlet is an attack on democratic government. It takes the Athenian constitution as the most perfect example of a democracy. The writer commends the Athenians for their pertinacious preservation of the form of government which they had chosen, but himself regards it as utterly wrong. The Athenians, he says, preferred that the bad should prosper rather than the good. This antithesis of the good aristocrats and the bad common folk is familiar to us in Theognis and Pindar, but was now thoroughly old-fashioned, especially at Athens, where democratic imperialism was at its height. It could only have been taken seriously by members of the aristocratic clubs which still met, discussed and plotted. It seems likely that the *Athenian Constitution* was written for one of these groups which held themselves aloof from the democracy. But the author fully realizes that it was on the *δῆμος* who rowed the ships that the empire depended and that in defending the empire they were defending the democratic party.

---

[34] *Protagoras*, 311 B.

Thucydides

The life of the greatest of Greek historians is known to us only in the barest outline. He was born at Athens probably about 460 B.C. and survived till after the surrender of the city to the Spartans in 404. He was not however of pure Attic stock. His father was called Olorus, a name borne by kings of Thrace, and he inherited estates and gold mines in Thracian territory perhaps near the Athenian possession Amphipolis. He was one of the few who caught and survived the great plague at Athens in 429. Five years later he commanded a squadron of Athenian ships operating off the Thracian coast and having a base at the island of Thasos. He received a message that the Spartan general Brasidas, then in Thrace, was threatening the valuable city of Amphipolis. He set off at once but arrived too late to save the town. Anticipating the sentence of exile or death which he knew the Athenians would impose for his failure, he took refuge in his Thracian home. Whether Thucydides was really to blame or was merely made a scapegoat by Cleon and the democratic war-party is uncertain. His voluntary exile does not prove his guilt; he knew well the temper and methods of the chauvinistic democrats. Our knowledge of the incident is drawn from his own writings (Bk. iv. 104–108 and v. 26) and it is characteristic of the man that he makes no attempt to defend himself, nor does he expressly take the blame. After this his movements are uncertain but he tells us (v. 26) that his exile gave him an opportunity to study the war from the Spartan side, and his knowledge of their affairs and plans makes it likely that he spent part of his exile in the Peloponnese. When, if ever, he visited Sicily is not known, but he knew well the geography of the neighbourhood of Syracuse. In 404 he returned to his now defeated city, and died some five years later.

The greatest and, so far as we know, the only work of Thucydides is a history of the war between Athens and Sparta from its beginning in 431 B.C. down to the Revolution of the Four Hundred in 411. At this point the narrative breaks off; Thucydides died when the work was still uncompleted. Now the war ended in 404, but it was not continuous during the whole twenty-seven years. A somewhat uncertain peace was made in 421 (Peace of Nicias). In 415 the Athenian expedition to Sicily led to a resumption of hostilities, and war continued till the fall of Athens. Thucydides began to write his history at the very beginning of the war, and for ten years kept a careful and systematic diary of the Ten Years' War. At the conclusion of the Peace of Nicias (Bk. v. 25) he stopped. After the resumption of hostilities he decided to continue his history; to revise and supplement the account of the first ten years; to describe the friction of the uncertain years 421–415; and to recount in detail the Sicilian expedition. It is impossible to say when he made up his mind to do this.[35] The great care which he bestowed on the Syracusan disaster seems to show that he knew it to be a decisive factor in the defeat of Athens; hence he may not have decided to make a continuous history of the whole war until after its conclusion. It seems likely however that he began at least to keep a diary of the Sicilian expedition, as he did for the Ten Years' War, at its inception. Whatever be the chronology of the composition of the different parts of the work, it bears the marks of having occupied some thirty years. Much of the work was written before the outcome of the war was known, but much was written and re-written in the light of afterevents. Exactly how much is hotly disputed. Parts of Books i.–iv. were clearly written after 404, but the revision has not concealed the fact that it was originally a contemporary account. No attempt has been made to remove minor inconsistencies. The expression "this war" means the Ten Years' War in the earlier books but the whole twenty-seven years in the later books.

A general introduction to the subject is given in i. 1–23. The opening words must have been written in 431.

> Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war in which the Peloponnesians and the Athenians fought against one another. He began to write when they first took up arms, believing that it would be great and memorable above any previous war. . . . No movement ever stirred Hellas more deeply than this; it was shared by many of the Barbarians, and might be said even to affect the world at large.[36]

Lest his conception of the importance of the subject should seem to be exaggerated Thucydides compares it with the early history of the Greek states when a war of such magnitude would have been impossible. These chapters form a striking contrast to all previous accounts of early Greek history. Instead of stories and genealogies of founders of cities we have a clear-sighted attempt to give us the best authenticated facts. History is no longer a handmaid of Epic poetry. Homer is, of course, a valuable witness but Thucydides realized (ch. 3) that Homer himself lived many years after the Trojan War. He traces sea-power back to the days of Minos and the time when piracy and marauding were honourable occupations. Had the expedition to Troy been more than a series of raids[37] the city would have fallen sooner (ch. 11). Nor does he find anything comparable to the Peloponnesian War in the history of Greece after Troy, not even, apparently, in the Persian Wars. The proem is brought to a close with an important chapter on the character and aims of his work, both the speeches and the narrative.

---

[35] See further, p. 201 below.

[35] This and other citations from Thucydides are in Jowett's translation (see Preface).

> As for the speeches which were made either before or during the war, it was hard for me, and for others who reported them to me, to recollect the exact words. I have therefore put into the mouth of each speaker the sentiments proper to the occasion, expressed as I thought he would be likely to express them, while at the same time I endeavoured, as nearly as I could, to give the general purport of what was actually said. (i. 22.)

There is no reason to disbelieve this very definite statement about the speeches; when Thucydides inserts a speech, we may be sure that a speech was delivered.[38] At the same time on his own admission the degree of accuracy must have varied greatly with the circumstances of each speech; some speeches he heard himself, others can only have been reported to him long after. Moreover, in giving the purport of the speeches, he did not attempt to reproduce variety of style; the language is that of Thucydides; thought and language are so inextricably mingled that we are right in regarding Thucydides as the author. It is nearly impossible to say in each case how much is due to Thucydides and how much to the speaker, but it is a fair surmise that the more difficult and involved speeches are those which owe most to the mind and thought of Thucydides. The chapter deals next with the narrative portions.

---

[37] Cp. above, p. 19.

[38] Some regard the Funeral Oration in 431 and the Melian Dialogue as non-historical and departures from the principle here laid down.

> Of the events of the war I have not ventured to speak from any chance information, nor according to any notion of my own; I have described nothing but what I either saw myself, or learned from others of whom I made the most careful and particular enquiry. The task was a laborious one, because eye-witnesses of the same occurrences gave different accounts of them, as they remembered or were interested in the actions of one side or the other. And very likely the strictly historical character of my narrative may be disappointing to the ear. But if he who desires to have before his eyes a true picture of the events which have happened, and of the like events which may be expected to happen hereafter in the order of human things, shall pronounce what I have written to be useful, then I shall be satisfied. My history is an everlasting possession, not a prize composition which is heard and forgotten. (i. 22.)

This promise of veracity Thucydides kept as far as was humanly possible. No historian before him had set up such a standard or come near to attaining it. In direct contrast to Herodotus who recorded everything he heard without committing himself to believe it, Thucydides will only record what he has every reason to believe to be true. Indeed the principles here set forth are a challenge to and a criticism of Herodotus and the story-tellers who wrote to interest and amuse. Thucydides rejects *τὸ μυθῶδες* (i. 21); his history is not a story but a *κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί*.

The historian proceeds next to the antecedents of the war, first the quarrel between Epidamnus and Corcyra, the intervention of Corinth on the side of Epidamnus and the consequent appeal of Corcyra to Athens. At the Athenian assembly which the Corcyræans addressed were present also envoys from Corinth who spoke in reply. The outcome was a defensive alliance between

Athens and Corcyra. The enmity between Corinth and Athens was further increased by the affair of Potidæa which appealed to Corinth and Sparta against Athens. This was the state of affairs in 432. Hitherto Sparta was not involved but the Corinthians now appeal to the Lacedæmonians in a speech which is a masterly criticism of the Spartan policy and character. Athenian envoys at Sparta also spoke, but in spite of the warnings of king Archidamus the Lacedæmonians decided on war.

> "In arriving at this decision," says Thucydides (i. 88), "and resolving to go to war, the Lacedæmonians were influenced, not so much by the speeches of their allies, as by the fear of the Athenians and of their increasing power. For they saw the greater part of Hellas subject to them."

This mention of the Athenian supremacy leads to an important digression describing the rise of the Confederacy of Delos and its development into an empire of the Athenians (89–117). Now this digression is unlike those of Herodotus; indeed it is not so much a digression as an analysis of the real cause of the war, and is intended to show that the Spartans had for fifty years had good reason to fear Athens. During the fifty years of Athenian empire-building

> the Lacedæmonians saw what was going on but during most of the time they remained inactive and hardly attempted to interfere. . . . They could now bear it no longer; they made up their minds that they must put out all their strength and overthrow the Athenian power by force of arms. And therefore they commenced the Peloponnesian War. (Ch. 118.)

War did not break out at once. There was an interchange of diplomatic notes between Athens and Sparta, each demanding the expulsion of the descendants of men who had been guilty of sacrilegious murder. The historian explains the pollutions of Cylon and Pausanias; the career of the latter after his success in the Persian Wars is told at length and is followed by an account of the somewhat similar end of Themistocles. In a modern history such digressions would have been relegated to an appendix or footnote, but there may be especial significance in the emphasis laid on Pausanias and Themistocles, forerunners of Alcibiades, two brilliant but dangerous men whom exile turned into traitors. The book ends with a speech by Pericles on the prospects of the war. His mention of the possibility of the Lacedæmonians fortifying a post in Attica (142) looks like a *vaticinium post eventum;* it may be that Thucydides in revising his work had consciously or unconsciously made Pericles appear to foretell the fortification of Decelea.

In the second book war has broken out; its narrative will be arranged, the author says, chronologically by summers and winters.[39] Given a secure starting-point, this system of dating is beyond reproach — another contrast to Herodotus. Hence Thucydides is careful to leave us in no doubt about the year of outbreak and defines it in four different ways (ii. 2). Aware of their weakness in land forces Pericles persuades the Athenians to leave their Attic homesteads and concentrate within the walls of the city or between the long walls which connected it with the naval port and dockyard Piræus. The forces of the Peloponnesian confederacy invaded Attica but Pericles refused to allow the Athenian infantry to go out and engage them, and tried to focus their attention on naval operations. That winter the funeral of the first victims of the war was celebrated and an oration pronounced by Pericles (ii. 35–46). Unlike the other Thucydidean speeches the famous Funeral Oration has no direct bearing on the conduct of the war; it would be equally suitable for any other year of the war. But the moment was opportune; the Athenians had had their first taste of the losses of war and needed encouragement. Perhaps too it was part of the custom to honour especially the first slain. In any case this is a speech which Thucydides must have actually heard spoken,[40] yet it is also one which seems to bear very many marks of Thucydides' own thought and language. Pericles' speech on the prospects of the war was more straightforward than the Epitaphius, and probably represents the original words more closely. As for the subject-matter there is no good reason to doubt that it is quite as Periclean as the earlier speech. It is a magnificent eulogy of the Athens which Pericles had done more than any man to create; it shows how she is superior to all other cities in government, justice, liberty, war, daily life, without excessive specialization or narrowness in culture. The very tortuousness of the language enhances the effect; the spell which contrast and antithesis seemed to cast over the minds of the Athenians still affects even readers of this encomium so that we almost allow ourselves to believe that the picture is true. That Thucydides himself believed it is an inference from his admiration for Pericles. As long as the so-called Athenian democracy was controlled by Pericles he acquiesced in it, but he did not believe in the democratic system, the free working of which was one of the causes of the ultimate defeat. The history of the war is also a history of political degeneration. With all the detachment of a scientist Thucydides watches and records the symptoms and progress of the disease. The healthy beauty of the body politic at the outset heightens the tragedy of the deterioration.

---

[39] Cp. v. 20. The year or archonship is too long a period to allow of any precision.

[40] But see above, note 38.

In the summer of 430 a plague swept over Egypt and the Persian Empire. The infection, evidently sea-borne, attacked first the Piræus then Athens; the Peloponnese escaped.

> "As to its probable origin," says Thucydides, ". . . every man, whether a physician or not, will give his own opinion. But I shall describe its actual course, and the symptoms by which any one who knows them beforehand may recognize the disorder should it ever reappear. For I was myself attacked, and witnessed the sufferings of others." (ii. 48.)

The disease is described in detail; so are its effects upon the overcrowded and suffering population and the philosophic historian, as always, records the moral as well as the physical deterioration.

> For, seeing the sudden change — how the rich died in a moment and those who had nothing immediately inherited their property — they reflected that life and riches were alike transitory, and they resolved to enjoy themselves while they could and to think only of pleasure. (53.)

The sufferings of the citizens recoiled on the head of Pericles who defended his policy in a speech which emphasizes the naval superiority of Athens, and is a vigorous defence of her imperialism. It is dangerous to relinquish an empire once acquired, even if men say it was unjustly won and has become oppressive; unpopularity is inseparable from widespread dominion. Not long after Pericles died. Thucydides comments on his career in a passage which must have been written or re-written after the final disaster. Had the Athenians followed Pericles' advice and not squandered their sea-power in vain attempts to extend their dominion, they could never have been beaten. But the violent and wrangling politicians who succeeded him were a canker which the city could not survive and she fell to an enemy whom she had been strong enough to conquer. The rest of Book ii. continues the narrative of the operations of the war in 429, of which the most interesting are the naval exploits of Phormio at the entrance to the Corinthian Gulf.

Though it contains nothing so fine as the Funeral Speech or so arresting as the description of the Plague, the third book is one which illustrates well the insight of Thucydides as a philosophic historian. In 427 the people of Mytilene in Lesbos revolted against the Athenian dominion and obtained help from Sparta.

> That Peloponnesian ships should have had the audacity to find their way to Ionia and assist the rebels contributed to increase their [*i.e.* Athenian] fury.

They succeeded in checking the revolt and sent a message to their general there instructing him to put all the Mytilenæans to death.

> But on the following day a kind of remorse seized them; they began to reflect that a decree which doomed to destruction not only the guilty, but a whole city, was cruel and monstrous. (iii. 36.)

A debate took place in which a certain Diodotus urged a less severe treatment and Cleon demanded that the original decree should be carried out. The former prevailed but the significant thing about the debate is that both speakers, even Diodotus, expressly disclaim any regard for justice or pity and base their claim only on expediency. This is the first appearance in Thucydides of Cleon "most violent of the citizens," who "at that time exercised by far the greatest influence on the people" (36). Thucydides saw in this would-be successor to Pericles the beginning of the internal degeneration of Athens; but on his Mytilenæan policy he expresses no opinion; it is in fact quite consistent with Pericles' advice to keep the allies well in hand. More will be heard of the dangerous demagogue. In the same year Platæa in Bœotia, for ninety-three years an ally of Athens and the scene of the great victory over the Persians in 479, capitulated to the Lacedæmonians after a long siege. Many of the inhabitants had escaped, and a discussion takes place on the fate of the remainder. The Platæans were allowed to plead their case but the debate, though it may have taken place, has an air of unreality and lacks the genuine excitement aroused by the discussion about Mytilene. The Spartan officers never really intended to give the Platæans a chance (iii. 68). In the same year there were violent political upheavals in Corcyra. The revolution had little direct influence on the war but it was the beginning of other conflicts in other cities, the oligarchs striving to bring in the Lacedæmonians, the democrats inviting the Athenians. Political degeneration was spreading and bringing moral degeneration with it.

> In peace and prosperity both states and individuals are actuated by higher motives, because they do not fall under the dominion of imperious necessities; but war which takes away the comfortable provision of daily life is a hard master, and tends to assimilate men's characters to their conditions. (iii. 82.)

We will not attempt to analyse further this analysis of war-time psychology, when "frantic energy was the true quality of a man" and "the lover of violence was always trusted, his opponent suspected." It is one of the best chapters in all historical writing.

The war continues. Pericles' advice is forgotten and an invasion of Ætolia attempted (Bk. iv.). A successful raid on the Peloponnesian coast leads to the fortification of a post at Pylos and a Spartan force is entrapped on the island of Sphacteria which lay close inshore. Never before had a Spartan army been in such an ignominious position; they even sue for peace. But the Athenians were now, as we should say, above themselves, or in the Greek phrase they were full of *ὕβρις*. We see now why Thucydides devoted so much space to the Corcyræan sedition. Athens was suffering from the same disease. They listened to Cleon, most violent of men, and demanded impossible terms. Next Cleon blames the generals for not having captured the island. Challenged by Nicias to do any better himself he accepts the offer, goes to Sphacteria with Demosthenes and astonishes everyone by bringing the Spartans as prisoners to Athens. But the Athenians still refuse to make peace. They are now toying with the idea of an empire in Sicily and punished two of their generals with exile for having allowed Athenian allies in Sicily to make peace with Syracuse. They further disregard Pericles' advice by an invasion of Bœotia which failed (424 B.C., iv. 93–101). Meanwhile there had arisen in Lacedæmon the greatest genius of the war, the Spartan general Brasidas, a man who combined justice and moderation with tireless energy and was "for a Lacedæmonian not a bad speaker" (iv. 84). He made his way northward through central Greece to Thrace.

He not only captures Amphipolis — the incident which led to Thucydides' banishment (see p. 188) — but did so much damage to the Athenian possessions in the neighbourhood that they actually consented to a truce for a year (423, iv. 117–119). In the summer of 422 the indomitable Cleon, apparently at his own suggestion (v. 2), went to Thrace and Chalcidice to deal with Brasidas. "He went to work in the same confident spirit which had already been successful at Pylos, and of which the success had given him a high opinion of his own wisdom" (v. 7). He was not the kind of general to which the troops were accustomed. They agreed with Thucydides in disliking his vulgarity and mistrusting his boastfulness. Whether he was really incompetent remains doubtful, for both he and Brasidas lost their lives within a few weeks. There was now on both sides a desire for peace. The Athenians were beginning to regret that they had not come to terms after the Pylos affair. They had not fared so well since then, and Cleon, the chief opponent of peace, was dead. The Lacedæmonians were anxious to recover the prisoners from Sphacteria. Thucydides gives the terms of the treaty, the Peace of Nicias (v. 23), which brought to an end the Ten Years' War in 421.

The twenty-sixth chapter of Book v. was written after 404. The Ten Years' War was turned into one of twenty-seven. Thucydides recalls a prophecy current all through the war that it would last thrice nine years, and with characteristic scepticism remarks that "this was the solitary instance in which those who put their faith in oracles were justified by the event." In the confusion and uncertainty of the years which followed the Peace of Nicias the war-party at Athens found a new leader — Alcibiades — a young man of good birth and hasty temper (ch. 43), whose conduct afterwards contributed largely to Athens' downfall. Sparta was now (420 B.C.) at war with Argos, which had been neutral during the Ten Years' War, but hostilities seemed likely to cease. Alcibiades was determined that they should go on and succeeded in inducing the Athenians to anger the Lacedæmonians by concluding an alliance with Argos[41]; Athenian troops took part in the battle of Mantinea (418) in which the Lacedæmonians by their victory regained their lost military prestige and detached the Argives from their Athenian alliance. For the rest the most striking feature of the fifth book is the curious document known as the Melian Dialogue (85–113). The island of Melos was a Lacedæmonian colony. In 416 envoys are sent from Athens to require them to show good reason why they should not be forcibly reduced and made to join the Athenian confederacy. The mission however is accompanied by a large armed force which encamps on the island. This meant, as the Melians saw (86), that there could only be one outcome of the discussion. The Athenian attitude is one of *Realpolitik.*

> We both alike know that into the discussion of human affairs the question of justice only enters where the pressure of necessity is equal and that the powerful must exact what they can, and the weak grant what they must.

The Melians reply that, justice being for the common good, it is expedient for all to respect it. The Athenians insist that it is in the interests of Melos to submit at once; as islanders they cannot afford to do without the protection of the Athenian navy; the Lacedæmonians were powerless. But honour, was the reply, demands that Melos stand by Sparta. The envoys quibble over the words "honour" (*αἰσχύνη*) and "disgrace" (*αἰσχρόν*) while accusing the Melians of being led astray by mere words; if it is disgraceful to desert one's friends, it is a far greater disgrace to have one's city wiped out, but there is no disgrace in voluntary submission to a great city which invites an alliance on reasonable terms. What the Athenians meant by reasonable terms the Melians knew well. They refused to submit, were besieged and defeated; all males of military age were put to death and the women and children sold as slaves.

---

[41] A marble slab inscribed with the terms of the alliance was discovered in 1877. Except in unimportant details it agrees well with Thuc., v. 47.

The motives of Thucydides in including this dialogue are not far to seek. It is not really an isolated phenomenon except in being in the form of a dialogue. The speeches about Mytilene and Platæa in Book iii. are the same kind of thing. Politics are a part of history, and in order to illustrate the policies of the antagonists in the war Thucydides shows them at work on particular cases instead of giving a general description. The method has the advantage that the historian's personal bias is less likely to come in. But these speeches, and the Melian Dialogue in particular, tell us something about Thucydides. They show him to be keenly interested in political morality. We do not know for certain what teachers he had among the Sophists but his history bears the marks of a varied education at their hands. The place of justice in political relations, the rights of the stronger and the weaker, the meanings of abstract terms, of right and wrong are subjects which Thucydides must have discussed many times. Other educated Athenians must have done so too, and there is at least no impropriety in putting sophistic arguments into the mouths of the Athenians at Melos, however much the historian may have unconsciously developed his theme.[42] The influence of the Sophists goes further than this. Thucydides does not write quite like Gorgias, yet he uses the same instruments of oratory. Like Gorgias he overdoes antithesis, often going out of his way to make a pair of opposites. But if the language of the speeches is often twisted and artificial, the narrative is usually clear. It is not however plain and simple like that of Herodotus but self-conscious and artistic.

The narrative powers of Thucydides were already well exemplified in such different themes as the Plague and exploits of Phormio; they rise to their greatest heights in the description of the Athenian expedition to Sicily in Books vi. and vii. After telling briefly of the early history of Sicily and its colonization by different Greek states the historian resumes the chronological arrangement by summers and winters; hence our attention is constantly being shifted to and from Sicily and Greece. Yet the Sicilian Expedition makes a good subject by itself, and when it was begun in 416 Thucydides cannot have known for certain that it would lead to a resumption of the war with Sparta. In Books vi. and vii. the expression "this war" means the twenty-seven years' war and the expedition is itself called the greatest operation of the war (vii. 87). Hence the narrative was certainly revised and probably a good deal of it first written down after 404. The expedition was nominally undertaken in order to help Athenian allies in Sicily but everyone knew that the real object was to establish an Athenian empire there by capturing the Corinthian colony of Syracuse, the most powerful state in the island. Alcibiades, Nicias and Lamachus were appointed to command the force. Nicias was opposed to the whole scheme and warned the Athenians that they would merely be giving an opportunity to Sparta to resume war on the mainland and that the task of reducing Syracuse was far greater than they imagined. Without mentioning Alcibiades by name he advises them not to listen to a young man who kept excellent horses and who wished to indulge his magnificent tastes at his country's expense. Before giving us Alcibiades' reply to this Thucydides interposes a few words of his own (vi. 15). He has no doubts whatever about the young man's ability, only about his motives. He agrees that Alcibiades wished for a successful command so that he might retrieve the private fortune which he had squandered, but he was a man who would not cooperate; he must have his own way. Hence the Athenians suspected him of wishing to make himself tyrant and had appointed along with him Nicias and Lamachus, men of less originality but honest and trustworthy. Alcibiades' own speech (16–18) is the best illustration of his character. He vindicates himself and his policy and the Athenians readily listened to his optimism. Nicias' repeated warnings about the magnitude of the task only lead to an increase in the vote of supplies for the expedition. Then occurred an incident which caused great alarm especially among the superstitious. Statues of Hermes standing at various street-corners were damaged in the night by unknown hands. Some said Alcibiades was responsible, but he was not at once brought to trial and took his place with the other commanders of the magnificent and costly fleet which had been fitted out. Thucydides, who, it must be remembered, cannot have been an eye-witness, describes the preparations and the departure (vi. 31–32) in a well-nigh perfect passage. There is no fine writing or abundance of imagery. There is strict economy of words, yet everything is adequately said. No additions or amplifications could have made the scene more vivid or made us share any more fully the excitement and enthusiasm which prevailed. Not a word is said of the coming tragedy, yet the feeling is strong that Thucydides knew the end when he wrote of the beginning. With the same severe restraint he continues the narrative, the voyage, the arrest and escape of Alcibiades,[43] the incredulousness of the Syracusans and the discussion on a plan of campaign. The Athenians are successful in their first battles with the Syracusans but subsequently retire to Naxos. A conference at Camarina at which both Syracusans and Athenians were present gives Thucydides an opportunity of presenting the two opposing points of view. Meanwhile the Corinthians bestir themselves and appeal to Sparta whither Alcibiades had fled to avoid his trial. Alcibiades joins in encouraging the Lacedæmonians to help Syracuse and his influence was largely responsible for the sending of a Spartan force under Gylippus to Syracuse early in 414. The Athenians meanwhile had resumed their attacks on Syracuse and were attempting to bar all access to it by land. In spite of their efforts Gylippus and his troops succeeded in entering the city just when the inhabitants were on the point of submitting (Book vii. ch. 2). The courage and energy of the Spartan officer did even more to restore their spirits than the three thousand troops which he brought, while they cast a gloom over the Athenians, especially Nicias who was ill and depressed and, Lamachus being killed, single-handed. This is the situation at the beginning of the famous seventh book. Nicias sends home a despatch which is both a moving human document and a masterly analysis of the military situation. The plight of an expeditionary force with insufficient cavalry in a country largely hostile is unforgettably described[44] (vii. 11–15). The Athenians resolved to send out more ships and troops but did not release the unhappy Nicias from his command as he had hoped.

---

[42] See above, p. 190.

---

[43] The fear of the Athenians lest A. should make himself tyrant leads to another "footnote" (53–60) on the fall of the tyranny of the sons of Pisistratus about 510 B.C. The subject was evidently much discussed. Thucydides has already referred to Harmodius and Aristogeiton (i. 20). Cp. Herodotus, v. 65.

Next year Decelea in Attica was fortified by the Lacedæmonians who did extensive damage. Operations at Syracuse continue. The Athenian fleet is worsted by the Syracusans whose hopes, however, are dashed by the arrival of the new Athenian force under Demosthenes. Failing in a night attack on the passage into the city which Gylippus still held, Demosthenes deemed the task impossible and counselled retirement. But Nicias loyally refused to disobey his orders. Before describing the succession of defeats which led to the final overthrow Thucydides pauses to give us a catalogue of the nations which took part on either side (57–58), and the courageous speech of Nicias to his despondent men (61–64), and of Gylippus to the Syracusans (66–68). A naval battle takes place within the Great Harbour, the entrance to which the Syracusans now held so that the Athenian fleet could not get away. We cannot help contrasting this battle with the naval operations in Book ii. Here the Athenian ships have no room to manœuvre but foul each other. It is no naval battle but a hand-to-hand fight. With something less than his usual restraint Thucydides describes the feelings of the onlookers and the panic of the Athenian infantry as they saw disappear all hope of escape by sea (70–71). They plan to retire by land to allies in the interior.

---

[44] Thucydides here does not profess to give an exact copy of the letter, but only what it set forth: *δηλοῦσαν τοιάδε.*

> On the third day after the sea-fight, when Nicias and Demosthenes thought that their preparations were complete, the army began to move. They were in a dreadful condition; not only was there the great fact that they had lost their whole fleet, and instead of their expected triumph had brought the utmost peril upon Athens as well as upon themselves, but also the sights which presented themselves as they quitted the camp were painful to every eye and mind. The dead were unburied, and when anyone saw the body of a friend lying on the ground, he was smitten with sorrow and dread, while the sick or wounded who still survived, but had to be left, were an even greater trial to the living, and more to be pitied than those who were gone. Their prayers and lamentations drove their companions to distraction; they would beg that they might be taken with them, and call by name any friend or relation whom they saw passing; they would hang upon their departing comrades and follow as far as they could, and, when their limbs and their strength failed them, and they dropped behind, many were the imprecations and cries which they uttered. . . . Never had an Hellenic army experienced such a reverse. They had come intending to enslave others, and they were going away in fear that they would be themselves enslaved. Instead of the prayers and hymns with which they had put to sea, they were now departing amid appeals to heaven of another sort. They were no longer sailors but landsmen, depending, not upon their fleet but upon their infantry. Yet in face of the great danger which threatened them all these things appeared endurable. (vii. 75.)

Nicias, ever mindful of his duties as an officer, made a final attempt to encourage his men. The delayed departure, the separation of the two straggling columns harried by pursuers, the crossing of the river Assinarus and the final slaughter and surrender of the remnants of a magnificent force must be read by all. Nothing like it had ever been written in prose before and very little since. Here we can only quote the final comment of the historian:

> Of all the Hellenic actions which took place in this war, or indeed, as I think, of all Hellenic actions which are on record, this was the greatest — the most glorious to the victors, the most ruinous to the vanquished; for they were utterly and at all points defeated, and their sufferings were prodigious. Fleet and army perished from the face of the earth; nothing was saved, and of the many who went forth few returned home. Thus ended the Sicilian expedition. (vii. 87.)

The eighth book brings us back to Athens where the news of the disaster could hardly be believed. It carries the history of the war down to 411 B.C. After the magnificence of the seventh book it falls a little flat. It is, moreover, unfinished. It contains no speeches, which seems to show that Thucydides spent especial care on the speeches and only incorporated them in his narrative at the final revision. The book is neglected more than it should be. If for no other reason it should be read because it shows the courage and energy of the Athenians after their disaster and in the face of rebelling allies. Moreover we meet again Alcibiades. The passions and prejudices of the Athenian demos had brought on their own heads the Sicilian disaster. The one man capable of carrying through that plan had been driven out to lend his aid to their enemies. But Alcibiades found that he could not have it all his own way in Sparta any more than in Athens and saw in the plight of his city a chance to secure his return. He was not at once successful and the establishment of an oligarchical government of Four Hundred is carried through without him. Thucydides records his approval of the new government[45] which he regards as a wise mixture of oligarchy and democracy (viii. 97). It did not, however, last long; democracy was restored and war went on. Had Thucydides lived to finish his history he would have shown us how the disease continued to sap the energy of the state instead of saving what could be saved. Again and again the war-party refused to make peace, clinging fast to the hope of a powerful dominion. But that story had to be finished by an inferior hand in the *Hellenica* of Xenophon.

---

[45] And in particular of the orator Antiphon (ch. 68), on whom see Part IV.

PART FOUR

Drama

There is perhaps no field of activity in which western civilization owes more to the Greeks than the theatre. Most of the terms which we use in this connection — tragedy, comedy, chorus, music, orchestra, theatre — are Greek words, a fact which serves to remind us of the debt. The danger, however, is not that we may forget what we owe, but that we may be misled by our familiarity with the terms into an erroneous conception of the real nature of Greek drama. We go to the theatre primarily to see and hear players *act;* the Greeks went to a religious service with music, dance and song. Even after the introduction of acting as we know it, tragedy at any rate did not lose its connection with religion and the choral element persisted. We have already observed that choral lyric poetry was intended to be performed; now our oldest extant tragedy, the *Supplices* of Æschylus, consists largely of choral lyric; but even this early play shows a stage of development far removed from any known form of choral lyric and shows moreover that lyric was the chief but not the only stream which fed the river of Attic drama.

Origins of Tragedy

There were at least three kinds of drama: tragedy, comedy and satyr-play. Though we possess no play of any kind older than Æschylus' *Supplices* (*c.* 490 B.C.) we are less in the dark about tragedy before Æschylus than about poetry before Homer. Unfortunately, however, our information is not always trustworthy and sometimes seems self-contradictory. There is scarcely a statement in our ancient authorities which has not been the subject of acute controversy. The question of the origin of tragedy turns chiefly on two points, (1) the original meaning of the words *τραγῳδός*, *τραγῳδία*, and (2) the correct interpretation of certain passages in ancient writers, especially in the *Poetics* of Aristotle. Now the meaning of *τραγῳδός* was not actor (*ὑποκριτής*) but a member of the chorus; *τράγος* means "he-goat," but what did the term "goat-singer" really signify? Were the *τραγῳδοί* goat-men, satyrs, or were they men dressed in goat-skins for some religious reason which may go back to primitive animal-worship? Or is the goat a prize for which they contended or which they sacrificed as part of a religious ritual? All these answers have been given, with evidence to support each one, but none has been conclusively proved right to the exclusion of the others. The etymology [1] of the word has yielded no certain key to the origin of *τραγῳδία*. Turning now to Aristotle we learn [2] that tragedy was at first mere improvisation and that it originated with the leaders of the dithyramb. This looks quite credible; it explains the obvious connection between tragedy and choral lyric, and there is no objection to associating it with the dithyramb in particular.[3] We have already had occasion to refer to the dithyrambs of Arion, Simonides, Pindar and Bacchylides (see Pt. II), but our extant dithyrambs are all later than the beginnings of tragedy. However, unless it changed its character greatly during the sixth and fifth centuries, it must have been a choral ode dealing with myths of gods or heroes; it was at first especially associated with Dionysus. So too in tragedy; the chief performances took place at the great festival of Dionysus in spring but it was not necessary that the play should deal with that god. Unfortunately, however, there is nothing in the dithyramb, as we know it, that has anything to do with goats, nor anything about goats or satyrs to make certain any particular connection with Dionysus. Representations of a Dionysiac chorus on early vases bear more resemblance to horses than to goats and have no obvious reference to the theatre. Yet Aristotle a little farther on says "It was not till late that the short plot was discarded for one of greater compass, and the grotesque diction of the earlier satyric form for the stately manner of tragedy." This looks like a reference to the satyr-play which in the fifth century was performed after each trilogy of plays. But even if Aristotle here means that tragedy arose from the satyr-play,[4] the explanation of *τραγῳδία* = goat-song does not follow.[5] The boisterous humour of the satyr-play gave way to something more serious, out of which tragedy grew. Is it possible to reconcile this with the dithyrambic origin? Aristotle seems to have had no qualms about it, but the Alexandrian critics rejected the idea of a satyric origin and said that the satyr-play was only brought to Athens by Pratinas of Phlius after the fall of the Pisistratids, that is, some twenty years after the tragedian Thespis had won his first prize and tragedy was well established; it was not the origin of tragedy but an addition to the programme. This was generally accepted as true and compelled scholars to seek other etymologies for *τραγῳδία*,[6] or alternatively to suppose that what Pratinas really did was not to introduce satyric drama to the Athenians for the first time but to re-establish it as part of the festival in order to regain something of the gaiety which had been lost by Thespis and Phrynichus making plays which had "nothing to do with Dionysus." [7] Since ancient accounts and modern interpretations of them differ so greatly, archæology, anthropology and comparative religion have been called in to aid literary tradition.[8] Their assistance has often been useful but no decisive conclusions have been reached. All that seems certain is that the origins of tragedy are very complex. The dithyramb, Dionysus-worship, satyric plays and possibly other "plays" may all have contributed something; how and in what measure remain obscure. Moreover if the question of the origin of drama were carried back beyond the realms of literature, it would be necessary to discuss the mimetic dances of certain cults. The stories of the lives of some gods and heroes were commemorated by a representation of their "sufferings" as an act of worship. The mysteries of Eleusis enacting, if that be the right word, the sufferings of Demeter are a case in point.[9] The idea therefore of representing myths mimetically instead of narrating them was very ancient; the ground, so to speak, was tilled and ready for the seeds of dramatic literature. Poetry which had long been occupied with narrative, both in epic and lyric, now finds a new field in dramatic representation.

---

[1] This list of etymologies proposed is not exhaustive: it is possible that there is no connection with *τράγος*, a goat. When Herodotus, v. 67, speaks of *τραγικοὶ χοροί*, the reference is probably to the shape of the dancing-place and arrangement of the performers; they did not dance in a circle but in lines.

[2] *Poetics*, iv. 12.

[3] But it does not explain the introduction of the actor: the *ἐξάρχων* of the dithyrambic chorus could not also be the *ὑποκριτής*.

---

[4] But it may be that he did not mean this and that there is no reference to the satyr-play as such, but only to some other kind of grotesque performance; but there was nothing grotesque about the dithyramb and it is difficult to get away from the dual origin.

[5] In any case *τραγῳδία* is performance by *τραγῳδοί* rather than "goat-song," and the chorus in the satyr-play *Cyclops* by Euripides certainly wore goat-skins. (*Cyclops*, 80–81.)

[6] Such as "song sung for a goat" as a prize, referred to above. This interpretation was accepted by Horace (*Ars Poet.*, 220). There was a story that Thespis did receive a goat as a prize. But it is due to Alexandrian scholars who wished to deny the Doric and satyric elements.

[7] See below, note 13.

It is interesting to note that this new development in literature takes place entirely at Athens. Hitherto, that is before 534 B.C., Athens has produced no poet of note save Solon. Now the position is reversed. Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides are all Athenians: Greek drama means Attic drama. Credit for this is due chiefly to the tyrant Pisistratus who first made Athens a literary centre by gathering around his court poets from all parts of the Greek world; but he did more than that. By the institution of dramatic contests at the festival of the Great Dionysia he ensured that Athens should become the home of drama.[10] He created a demand for plays and encouraged Athenians to write and produce them. When Pisistratus was dead and his son Hippias driven out (*c.* 509 B.C.)

---

[8] It has been possible to refer here only to a small part of the literary evidence.

[9] Also the Stepteria at Delphi, which commemorated the slaying of the dragon Pytho by Apollo.

[10] Other tyrants, *e.g.* Cleisthenes at Sicyon (Herod., v. 67) and Periander at Corinth, encouraged both Dionysus-worship and choral performances, but their relation to tragedy is obscure.

the democratic government at Athens took over the arrangements. The performance of a tragedy was not, like the performance of an epinikian ode, a matter which concerned one man; it belonged to the whole people. Hence while the court-poets disappeared along with their masters, the theatre took fresh life from the newly won freedom of the people.

Early Tragedians

The first record of a performance of a tragedy is associated with the name of Thespis who during the tyranny of Pisistratus (*c.* 534 B.C.) produced a composition which combined choral lyric with Ionic spoken verse. The leader of the chorus, when not engaged in singing, held a dialogue with a ὑποκριτής or "answerer." [11] This dialogue was spoken in iambic or trochaic verse. The subject of the tragedy, as we may now call it, was, like that of the dithyramb, a piece of mythology, one of the "slices from the banquet of Homer," [12] but the new composition differs alike from dithyramb and epic in that the verse is no longer narrative. The chorus and the actor are characters in the story. Shortly after the fall of the Pisistratids, as we have seen, came to Athens Pratinas of Phlius. The satyric drama which he brought or re-established was by now something quite different from the tragedy with which Thespis had already won a prize, whatever may have been their original connection. But the innovation met with approval and a place was found in the festival for the amusing satyr-play as well as the serious tragedy. Pratinas was himself the author of a number of tragedies.[13]

---

[11] The normal Greek word for "actor."

[12] So Æschylus is said to have spoken of his plays (see Part II, note 69), but subjects not drawn from mythology were early used in tragedy, *e.g.* by Phrynichus.

[13] A fragment of a choral work, probably from a satyr-play, has survived in which a chorus of satyrs attack another chorus, whose chief crime seems to be excessive devotion to the flute instead of the good old Dorian choral song, the dithyramb in honour of Dionysus. There must have been a good deal of popular feeling behind this and other protests against the innovations of the other earlier tragedians; it gave to Greek the proverb *οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον*. (Diehl, *Anth. Lyr.*, vol. 2. p. 124.)

More famous as a tragedian was Phrynichus whose first success was at the festival in 511. He was thus a slightly older contemporary of Pindar and Æschylus. Aristophanes compares the sweetness of his lyrics to honey [14] but speaks slightingly of his excessive simplicity of action.[15] We know the titles of several plays, two of which, the *Phœnissæ* and the *Sack of Miletus*, dealt with subjects from contemporary history. The fragments are too few and short to allow us to judge the sweetness of his lyrics but they show a sense of poetry with a liking for alliteration.

Production of Plays

An Athenian could not go and see a play at the theatre just when he wished. New tragedies were produced once a year at the Great or City Dionysia in March, new comedies usually at the Lenæa about the end of January, but comedies were also performed at the Dionysia and by the latter half of the fifth century tragedies were performed at the Lenæa. Both festivals made use of the great theatre of Dionysus [16] and both were under the care of a high state official; the Great Dionysia belonged to the department of the Chief Archon (Eponymus), the Lenæa to the Archon Basileus. In the fifth century the theatrical part of the Dionysia lasted three days, one day being assigned to each of the three competitors, who each entered three tragedies and a satyr-play, all four being performed in a single day. The three tragedies were often, like the *Oresteia* of Æschylus, a group dealing with one story; but this was not essential. A play once produced at the Dionysia could not be entered again for a competition but it could usually be seen at a "provincial" theatre at Eleusis, Piræus, Salamis and elsewhere. But in the fourth century the dearth of good new tragedies led to many revivals of old ones. A poet who wished to produce a tragedy at the Dionysia had first to apply to the Archon

---

[14] *Birds*, 748 ff.

[15] *Frogs*, 910 ff.

[16] The earliest theatre was of wood. In 499 part of the auditorium collapsed and many lives were lost. Of the actual condition of the Dionysiac theatre in the fifth century we are ill-informed. The stone theatre was not completed till about 335 B.C. (Lycurgus; see Part V.)

Eponymus for a chorus. The archon assigned to the poet a χορηγός, generally a prominent citizen, who undertook to be responsible for all the expenses. To train the chorus he employed a διδάσκαλος who might be the poet himself. He was not concerned with choosing the actors (ὑποκριταί) whom the archon selected with the poet. At first there was only one "answerer." Æschylus added a second, Sophocles a third. Before Sophocles the poet himself was often both actor and trainer. The limit to the number of actors must have been a severe handicap, even though one actor often played two parts. A tragic chorus in Æschylus' time consisted of twelve [17] men, in Sophocles' time and after of fifteen. Admittance to the theatre was at first free, but after the beginning of the fifth century there was a small entrance-fee, which, however, in the fourth century was paid by the state for needy citizens. Women appear to have attended tragic performances and visitors from all parts crowded the city every year for the Great Dionysia. There were five judges who arranged the entries, usually three in number, in order of merit. The prize belonged to the choregus, who had borne the expense, but a money award was made to the poet and before the end of the fifth century the chief actor (πρωταγωνιστής) also received a prize.

Aeschylus

The first of the three masters of Attic tragedy was born in Eleusis in Attica about 524. He was thus in his 'teens when the tyrants were driven out of Athens and Cleisthenes carried through one of the most remarkable state-reorganizations which the world has ever seen. He laid the foundations of a democratic constitution which even its enemies admitted to be the most perfect example of its kind. The new and vigorous Athens which grew up at the beginning of the fifth century soon found herself involved along with other Greek cities in an unparalleled danger. The invasion of Darius was defeated by the Athenian infantry at Marathon. Ten or eleven years later the fleet of Xerxes was destroyed at Salamis. In both these wars Æschylus took part and when he died in Gela, in 455, his Sicilian friends inscribed on his tomb the words —

---

[17] In his earliest play, the Ἱκετίδες, there were fifty. It seems that after that time the total chorus was divided into four, a part for each play of the tetralogy — three tragedies and a satyr-play. Once the chorus appeared it did not as a rule leave till its final exit. Except in the earliest plays there was a prologue spoken by actor or actors before the entrance of the chorus. The other non-lyrical parts, in iambics or trochaics, were called *epeisodia:* the word literally means the "coming on (of the actor) in addition to (the chorus)."

> Æschylus, son of Euphorion, an Athenian, lies beneath this memorial. He died in grain-growing Gela. Of his glorious courage the plain of Marathon could tell and the long-haired Mede who knew it.

Here there is no mention of his poetry, yet no one can say that this was not the epitaph Æschylus himself would have wished. A better patriot has never existed. Though he lived most of his life at Athens, his knowledge of distant lands was only equalled by that of Herodotus, who was intellectually far his inferior. Late in life he twice stayed at the court of Hiero of Syracuse and he ended his days in Sicily. Later generations, scenting a scandal, invented stories to account for his departure from Athens. But Æschylus' intelligent understanding of other lands did not impair his love for his own, to which, however, his greatest service was not his fighting at Marathon but his work as a poet and a tragedian. Whether at home or abroad he was through his plays the best ambassador of his native land, now fast becoming the foremost literary centre of the Greek world. Æschylus was virtually the creator of Attic tragedy. In his hands it transcended the narrow limits of a local festival and became the universal possession first of the Hellenic race, thereafter of all posterity. Yet our first acquaintance with Tragedy, which is perhaps the greatest gift of Athens to the world, is likely to be a little disappointing unless we rid ourselves of certain preconceived ideas. We must not look in early tragedy for great events and exciting plots. The amount of material, in terms of story, which Æschylus found necessary for a tragedy is very small; the plot can often be told in a few words. This is partly because Æschylus was a lyric poet as well as a playwright and because the sung portions, though they seem to check the action, are an integral part of the play. But it is due even more to the fact that the essential requirements for a tragedy are in reality small, and abundant material for his many plays was to be found both in myth and history. It was only essential that there should be a conflict, but it must be a conflict of which the issue was of supreme moral or religious importance. Æsychlus, like Pindar, was a theologian who believed in the Olympian gods, but he had greater insight than Pindar and penetrated more deeply into the mysteries of the divine government of the world. He did not question either the existence of the gods or their justice; he was far removed from such scepticism; he saw the hands of the gods everywhere at work and in the relations of man to God or even of god to god he found abundant material both for tragedy and poetry.

The "Suppliant Women"

Æschylus according to Suidas was the author of ninety plays; another account gives seventy tragedies and five satyr-plays. We know the titles of seventy-nine, but only seven tragedies and no satyr-plays were preserved for us by the Alexandrian scholars. The choice of these seven is in one respect fortunate; they are widely separated in time and enable us to see the development of the tragic technique from the *Supplices*, where the choral element still predominates, to the complete trilogy the *Oresteia* in 458. The story of the *Supplices* is extremely simple but it should be remembered that it is only the first play of a trilogy. The chorus, from which the play takes its name, consists of the fifty daughters of Danaus [18] who are the chief centre of interest in the play. The rest of the dramatis personæ are their father Danaus, Pelasgus king of Argos whither they have fled from Egypt in order to escape from an unwanted marriage with their fifty cousins, and lastly a herald from these Egyptians. Only two of the three ever appear at the same time. There is no prologue: the chorus are present from the start and all through. The scene is Argos and the play is performed in the orchestra or dancing-place in which the chorus dance around an altar of Zeus. Their first song is a prayer to Zeus to help them as he had helped their grandmother Io. The first piece of action is a debate between their father Danaus and the king of Argos. The king is sorry for the suppliants but realizes that to offer them protection may mean war with a powerful foreign power. But he decides to give them sanctuary and goes to obtain the consent of his people. During his absence the chorus perform again, then Danaus returns and announces the welcome decision; the sanctuary of the altar of Zeus is claimed. This has occupied more than half of the play: nothing else has happened. But an early Greek tragedy does not consist of a succession of incidents. It was a celebration, most of which was done by singing and dancing. Yet the stuff of which high tragedy is made is there in the first half of this play; it presents a conflict of duties. The issue before the Argive king, whether to help the suppliants and involve his people in war or to save his people and abandon the girls, was intensely real to the audience; in one form or another such situations must constantly have arisen in interstate politics in Greece. The rest of the play is another conflict. The brutal messenger from the Egyptians, using strange, uncouth words, demands the return of the women as a right, which he is about to exercise with violence when the Argive king reappears with his troops:

---

[18] See above, note 17.

Where is the wrong? What error have I wrought? . . .
I have found the chattels I had lost. What more?[19]
(917, 919.)

This conflict between man's right to marriage and woman's right to refuse it is not decided, but war is imminent. The story was continued in two lost plays, the *Egyptians*, in which the hated marriage finally takes place, and the *Danaids*, in which all the brides save Hypermnestra murder their husbands in bed.

---

[19] Tr. G. G. A. Murray.

The "Persae"

The *Persæ* was the middle play of a trilogy dealing with the clash between Greece and Persia. It was produced in 472 and Pericles was the choregus. There is still no prologue and two actors suffice, but in other respects the technique of drama has advanced since the *Supplices*. The amount of lyric performance still outweighs the spoken lines, but only slightly, and it is noteworthy that most of the singing comes at the beginning (154 lines) and at the end (225 lines). Between there is great preponderance of dialogue. The theme is a popular one and won great renown for the author; it is the victory of the Athenian over the Persian fleet at Salamis just eight years before. The play, however, is not a celebration of Athens' success but a Persian lament. The scene is laid in Susa and the whole is seen through the eyes of Persian characters. At first sight the subject hardly seems suitable for a tragedy; there is no central figure, no moral conflict, no decisions to be made, the war was already undertaken. The play consists chiefly of the anxious waiting of Atossa, Xerxes' mother, and the chorus of Persian elders, Atossa's dream, the news brought by a messenger who recounts the disaster, the summoning and appearance of the ghost of Darius who learns of the disaster and warns his people against all further attempts on the Greeks, especially at sea. Later the defeated Xerxes returns and takes part in the lament for the fallen. Out of this material Æschylus has made a war-play of exceptional power. The central interest of the play is not Xerxes or Darius but the Persian nation as represented by Atossa and the chorus; they have been overcome with disaster through the ὕβρις of their king. There is no moral or theological problem; the gods have shown their power and their justice by decreeing that the wanton might of Xerxes and his huge host should fall before the free Athenians. Yet there is no militant nationalism. The character of the dead king Darius is sympathetically drawn. He had understood the lesson of Marathon, and his summoning from the dead by his stricken people is one of the most effective and dramatic features of the play.

The "Seven against Thebes"

Further advance in dramatic power is shown in the *Seven against Thebes* (*c.* 467). The lyric portions, including sung dialogue, are now slightly outweighed by the spoken verses. Moreover the dramatic rôle of the chorus itself is much reduced. Their entry is preceded by a prologue and they are no longer the centre of interest; rather they stand outside the action and in the play Eteocles, resenting their interference, reproaches them as idle spectators. In this Eteocles we have our first tragic hero. That he is doomed to slay his brother unwittingly in battle the audience all know. Far from lessening the excitement their knowledge of the story added greatly to the pleasure of the listeners to every Greek tragedy. The skilful dramatist hints at the coming catastrophe through the very mouth of the hero, and words which sound innocent in themselves would give a thrill to hearers who saw their veiled meaning. The *Septem* is the third play of a trilogy; it was preceded by tragedies on Laius and Œdipus. Eteocles and Polyneices are the third generation of the accursed house of the sons of Labdacus and cannot escape their fratricidal doom:

> Now do our eyes behold
> The tidings which were told:
> Twin fallen kings, twin perished hopes to mourn,
> The slayer, the slain,
> The entangled doom forlorn
> And ruinous end of twain.
> Say, is not sorrow, is not sorrow's sum
> On home and hearthstone come?
> O waft with sighs the sail from shore,
> O smite the bosom, cadencing the oar
> That rows beyond the rueful stream for aye

To the far strand,
The ship of souls, the dark,
The unreturning bark
Whereon light never falls nor foot of Day,
Ev'n to the bourne of all, to the unbeholden land.
(848–860; tr. A. E. Housman.[20])

Later Plays

To the latest period of Æschylus' life belong two famous trilogies, the *Prometheia* of which we have only one play, and the *Oresteia* of which we have all three. During the last decade of the life of Æschylus Sophocles was already a successful dramatist and exercising an influence on the development of drama. He had introduced a third actor — to us an obvious improvement. That the number was still so limited may serve as a reminder that tragedy was still a choral performance with the addition of "answerers." Again the action does not now take place entirely in the orchestra. The chorus still perform there but the actors are on a slightly raised[21] platform beyond the orchestra. This platform had a background appropriate to the play: it might be the front of a palace or of a temple or, as in the *Prometheus*, a mountain, but there was no elaborate attempt at a realism which would have been impossible in an open-air theatre.

"Prometheus Vinctus"

The trilogy *Prometheia* consisted of the *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus Released* and *Prometheus Fire-carrier*, probably in that order.[22] Our loss of the latter two makes it difficult to comprehend fully the meaning of the first and to know exactly how Æschylus resolved the conflict between Prometheus and Zeus which is its theme. In the play Zeus has but recently won the kingship of the gods by casting into Tartarus his father Kronos and the other Titans; he was intending also to destroy the race of man. Prometheus, who alone of all the Titans had assisted Zeus, saved the human race by giving them fire, teaching them its uses and putting new hope in their breasts. With all the ruthlessness of a newly made ruler Zeus uses Power and Violence and sends these two to chain and nail Prometheus to a rock in a desolate part of Scythia. The chaining of the hero is the beginning of the play. Cratos and Bia are assisted in their task by Hephæstus who under the régime of Zeus is master of fire and its uses. Left to himself Prometheus, who has refused to answer the taunts of his torturers, breaks into a fine monologue. This is all preliminary to the entry of the chorus, the daughters of Ocean. They sympathize with the victim but gently reprove him; if Zeus is a harsh tyrant, Prometheus is obstinate and disobedient. Their father Oceanus enters; he is one of the elder gods but one who has made his submission and maintained his position under Zeus. He is ready with professions of friendship and good advice:

---

[20] See Preface, note 1.

[21] The point is disputed; see Aristoph., *Knights*, 149–151.

[22] So G. Thomson in his edition. He puts the *Prometheia* later than the *Oresteia*, perhaps rightly.

> Oh know thyself and clothe thy mind with new
> Thoughts. A new god is now Lord of lords.[23]
> (309–310.)

In a sense Oceanus is right. This is precisely the lesson that Prometheus will not learn. He glories in his refusal to yield an inch and sends Oceanus away, bidding him attempt no intercession with Zeus on his behalf. The chorus sing a song of bitter disappointment to which Prometheus replies with an account of his services to mankind. The chorus can but reiterate their belief in Zeus. The next episode is of exceptional interest. Æschylus goes out of his way to show us the nature of the new oppressor. Io tortured and chased over many lands tells her story and Prometheus foretells her future sufferings. Prometheus knows that the overlordship of Zeus may be overthrown as his father's was and he knows what will save it, but he will not say; this part of the action clearly looks forward to the later plays of the trilogy when Zeus in pursuing Thetis, as he pursued Io, is unwittingly in danger of begetting a son who shall destroy him. Prometheus the Forethinker knows too that he will eventually be set free but he speaks only of Io's future wanderings in strange lands. Here is a theme for poetry after Æschylus' own heart. Like Milton, who was in many ways indebted to him and especially to the *Prometheus*, Æschylus creates a mental background out of poetic names. Lastly Hermes is sent by Zeus. Prometheus is now more openly defiant than ever and full of contempt for this minion of the tyrant. He is unmoved by Hermes' threats of further punishment:

---

[23] Tr. Murray.

> First, this gulf of jagged rock
> The Sire shall rend in twain with thunder-shock
> And fire of lightning. Deep shalt thou be thrown
> Below the earth, gripped by an arm of stone;
> Till, when an age-long space of years is past,
> Back to the light above thou rise at last,
> And then — God help thee! — the Sire's winged hound,
> The blood-red eagle ravening, wound by wound,
> Shall tear thy giant corse, and shred by shred;
> Day after day, unbidden, to be fed
> He comes, and heavy-pinioned shall depart
> Blood-gorged from thy gnawed and blackened heart.[24]
> (1016–1025.)

Prometheus of course knew all this but the chorus flee in terror, the earth opens and the Titan disappears. Even without the rest of the trilogy the *Prometheus Bound* is one of Æschylus' best plays, inferior only to the *Agamemnon*. It is a magnificent picture of a rebel, not a rebel for his own sake but for the sake of a race to which he did not himself belong; he has nothing to gain and everything to lose by his championship of man. But while he wins our sympathy, as every tragic hero must, his increasing stubbornness, culminating in his abuse of Hermes, makes us feel that he is doomed. This is not to say that his self-sacrifice was wrong or that

---

[24] Tr. Murray.

Æschylus intended us to believe that he was justly punished. His fate in the play was not due to his previous acts but to himself, his rebellious and obstinate frame of mind. As for Zeus, he is now supreme god whose will is law. His cruelty is the outcome of fear; he is nervous of losing his newly won power. Æschylus constantly emphasizes this. For all his whole-hearted belief in Zeus he knows well that the ruler of the gods, like earthly tyrants, had to begin his reign with Power and Violence as his most trusted helpers and by a ruthless suppression of all opposition. We may hazard a guess that during the subsequent plays, countless ages later, the government of Zeus had become mild and just, making possible that reconciliation at which Shelley was so indignant, but our fragments of them are too few to allow us to do more than speculate how this conflict of two iron wills was settled.

The "Oresteia"

The *Agamemnon* is unquestionably Æschylus' masterpiece. Not only is it much longer than his other extant plays, which are all short judged by later standards, but in it Greek tragedy reaches full maturity. Without the *Agamemnon* we should have known Æschylus only as a pioneer and have supposed that he left to others the perfection of the art which he had elaborated. But Æschylus was more than a pioneer; he went on learning and improving to the end. The *Oresteia* which won first prize in 458 was produced only two years before his death. Briefly, the story of the *Oresteia* is as follows: during the absence of Agamemnon at Troy his wife Clytæmnestra has been unfaithful to him with his cousin Ægisthus. On his return she slays him and his captive girl Cassandra. Their young son Orestes is abroad; when he has become a man he returns at Apollo's bidding and slays his mother and her paramour. He goes mad; his guilt pursues him in the form of the Erinyes. He takes refuge at a shrine of Athene who holds a trial at which the issues involved are discussed at length and a settlement is reached.

The "Agamemnon"

Of this trilogy the *Agamemnon* is the first and most famous member. A play which deals with the homecoming of a soldier to a wife who has been unfaithful is likely always to be interesting to the race of men, but that is not really the theme of the *Agamemnon*. Adultery was not in itself interesting. It is not a play of love but of fierce hatred, vengeance and lust for blood. Clytæmnestra kills Agamemnon not because he is an inconveniently returning husband, but because she hates him. She has hated him ever since he sacrificed their daughter Iphigeneia at Aulis in order that he might proceed with his grandiose but ridiculous war for the recovery of his runaway sister-in-law Helen. Men who sacrifice their daughters to gratify their ambition are not confined to the age of mythology.

The famous prologue is spoken by a watchman on the roof of the palace of Argos; he sees a beacon which is the last of a chain of signals by which the fall of Troy is made known within a few hours to Clytæmnestra. The chorus enters; they consist of Argive elders who are faithful to Agamemnon; they are full of apprehension and dark allusions — they dare not speak freely — to the evil that is within the palace. Their first song harks back ten years to the beginning of their woes and Agamemnon's murder of Iphigeneia. What will be the outcome they do not know, but they know that there will be an outcome and a lesson to be learnt only through suffering. They believe in Zeus, "whosoe'r he be," and pray to him that all may yet be well. The tension is relieved by Clytæmnestra who gives a description in Æschylus' fine figurative language of the chain of beacons by which she knows of Troy's fall. The chorus receive the news with mixed feelings; it was right that Troy should fall, but success is dangerous and "the gods mark those that slay much" (461) — a dark saying which might be a motto for the whole trilogy. Some weeks elapse and the next episode sees the return of the first man home from the war, dirty and weary but full of the joy of victory and of homecoming. Clytæmnestra makes a brief entry and bids the herald take a lying message of loyalty to his lord. For the entry of Agamemnon we are prepared by another chorus. They sing of Helen whose sin caused the fall of Troy; thus does sin never die but gives birth to sin upon sin. The dread succession *ὄλβος ὕβρις ἄτη* never fails. With this ominous song still ringing in our ears Agamemnon enters with a large retinue in which is led captive Cassandra the prophetess, a daughter of Priam and the Argive king's chosen prize. The loyal greeting of the chorus is met with disdain; the successful man can trust no one and the king hints at stern measures. Clytæmnestra stands on the palace steps. In stately, measured language she professes her fidelity and her joy at her lord's return. She flatters him and entices him. She plays upon his pride. She has a crimson carpet spread before him. Her words are full of double meaning. "Let there be laid forthwith a crimson carpet that *Justice* may lead him to an *unlooked-for* home." Agamemnon hesitates. To the Greeks rich carpets typified all that they most hated and dreaded in oriental despotism. If Agamemnon steps from his chariot on that carpet, we feel his doom is sealed. Ate will follow Hybris. So great are Æschylus' dramatic power, mastery of language and technique of tragedy. In the end he yields to her blandishments and walks the crimson path. The queen enters the palace too and all the retinue save Cassandra. After a terror-stricken song by the chorus Clytæmnestra comes out again and orders Cassandra into the house. The captive prophetess appears to understand nothing, and after a few jibes the queen goes in again. Then Cassandra begins to speak in raving words. The old men of the chorus are sympathetic but unable to make her talk intelligibly. Her raving songs are full of murder, blood and slaughter to come:

Ah! Ah! Beware! Beware!
From his accursed mate
Keep far the bull. In vestments
She entangles him, and with her black and crafty horn
Gores him. He falls into the cauldron's steam.

Treacherous murdering bath,
Thus thy dark story is told.[25] (1125–1129.)

She ceases to prophesy and speaks of herself to the chorus. Then she is seized again by her visions and utters veiled allusions to the past sins of the whole house of Pelops. Recovering again, she tells them openly that Agamemnon will be murdered in his bath and she herself too. When finally she has gone into the palace and we hear the cries of the victims, the chorus are powerless. They can but await the return of Clytæmnestra, in her hand the axe dripping with blood. Drunk with murder she exults in all the gory details of her deed. She is without remorse; she has but been the instrument of just vengeance both for his murder of Iphigeneia and for all the sins of his ancestors, and as for their wedlock he was as unfaithful as she, with his oracle-mongering mistress sprawling beside him on the ship's bench and countless other women at the war. The play ends with a violent altercation between Ægisthus, now to be king, and the chorus. They stood in awe of Clytæmnestra but for her lover they have nothing but contempt.

Thus the *Agamemnon*, though complete and perfect in itself, ends like other first plays of a trilogy in a conflict. The issue is one of the deepest import for mankind. Civilized man believes in Justice and that the divine government of the world must rest upon Justice. But is not vengeance just? Is it not the very essence of Justice that evil deeds be punished? "As long as Zeus abides on his throne, so long abides this truth that the doer is also the sufferer." So sang the chorus in the Agamemnon (1563–4) and Clytæmnestra's claim that she has done a just deed is quite consistent with this. But if the murderer of Iphigeneia was justly slain surely the murder of Agamemnon will not go unpunished. This is the hope of his other daughter Electra who, virtually a prisoner in her mother's house, has for twenty years been brooding over her father's death and longing for her brother Orestes' return, until iron has entered into her soul and her obsession is so great that she snatches at any straw of hope — a strange footprint or dust sprinkled on her father's tomb. At the beginning of the *Choephori* Orestes appears with his companion Pylades. They see Electra and the chorus, the Libation-Bearers, approaching Agamemnon's tomb and for a time watch and listen from a hiding-place. Then they come forth, brother and sister are reunited. Orestes has come at the bidding of Apollo to slay his father's murderers, for the blood of the slain man is calling for vengeance. The chorus agree; are not the old sayings still true? "Murderous blow for murderous blow," "*δράσαντι παθεῖν*, to the doer suffering." To Orestes they say:

---

[25] Tr. R. C. Trevelyan.

> No fire ravening red,
>   O Son, subdueth quite
> The deep life of the dead;
>   His wrath breaks from the night.
> When they weep for one who dies
> His Avenger doth arise,
>   Yea, for father and life-giver
> There is Justice, when the cries
>   And the tears run as a river.[26]
>
> (323–331.)

The murder is quickly planned. Electra goes into the palace. Orestes and Pylades pretend to be Phocian travellers who have been asked to take a message to the queen that Orestes is dead. Clytæmnestra appears and they tell their tale. Her grief is genuine; another of her children taken from her by the curse that hangs over the house. If ever we inclined to suppose that the sacrifice of Iphigeneia was only her excuse and not a real motive for the slaying of her husband, we know now that we were wrong. She is no fiend but a tigress fighting for her young. The pathos is heightened by the tearful reminiscences of Orestes' aged nurse who is on her way to summon Ægisthus. The chorus astutely bid her tell him to come at once and without armed retainers. In due course Ægisthus appears and enters the palace. Again we hear the cries of a murdered man, but the slaying of Clytæmnestra is not yet. We see mother and son face to face. Orestes hesitates but Pylades urges him to obey the command of Apollo: "Rather hold all men enemies than the gods," he says, and his precept is one which no believer in religion can reject. So Orestes is deaf to her entreaties and drives her within. After a short choral ode the palace doors are opened and another man and woman lie murdered before our eyes. But there is a difference. Orestes defends but does not exult in his deed like Clytæmnestra, though even she was afterwards troubled by her husband's spirit. Even while he is speaking Orestes begins to see things invisible to the rest. He knows he is going mad. "While I am sane I say it, I say it to my friends, I say I was right to kill my mother" (1026–7). Then he sees the Erinyes "Gorgon-like, in dusky raiment, twined about with coils of swarming snakes." Unable to bear it longer he rushes off. Again murder has come to the house of Pelops.

---

[26] Tr. Murray.

> What end shall there be? When shall the fury
> Of revenge sink lulled into slumber? [27]

Orestes is as nearly innocent perhaps as a mother-murderer could be. He has obeyed the gods. But the avenging spirits goaded by the ghost of Clytæmnestra thirst for his blood and pursue him ceaselessly. All the past experience of the house of Pelops has shown what a murderer must expect. His only hope is in the god Apollo who, at Zeus' bidding,[28] had commanded the slaying and who has now given him absolution and purification of his blood-guiltiness. From his Pythian shrine Apollo bids the chorus of Erinyes to be gone:

Chorus. Sovereign Apollo, hear now our reply. . . .
Thou alone didst all; the whole guilt is thine.
Apollo. How? Make that clear. I grant thee speech so far.
Chorus. Thy voice enjoined this man to slay his mother.

---

[27] Tr. R. C. Trevelyan.

[28] *Eum.*, 618.

Apollo. I enjoined him to avenge his sire. What then? . . .
Chorus. We hunt forth mother-slayers from all homes.
Apollo. How deal you then with wives who slay their lords?
Chorus. That were no true murder of kindred blood.
Apollo. Then of slight honour and no worth you make
The troth-plight between Zeus and crowning Hera. . . .
The fate-sealed marriage bed of man and wife
Fenced with its rights is mightier than all oaths. . . .
But Pallas at this trial shall arbitrate.[29]
(198–224.)

The scene changes to Athens, where under the presidency of Pallas Athene this issue will be fought out before a court of Athenians sitting on the hill of Ares (Areopagus). No fight between angel and devil for the soul of a Christian was ever more exciting than this struggle for Orestes to the lawsuit-loving Athenians. Their own most ancient court is represented as trying a case of remote antiquity.[30] If a son is primarily his mother's, then the chorus are right and Orestes' murder of his mother is more criminal than Clytæmnestra's murder of her husband who was not her kin. But if, as Apollo maintains, a son is primarily his father's and the mother but a vehicle for the birth, then Orestes' vengeance was just. The votes of the jury are evenly divided; the casting vote is with Athene who gives it for the acquittal of Orestes. Sanity and moderation have prevailed; the endless succession of murder upon murder has been broken and the Justice of Zeus is vindicated. But what of the Erinyes and their Justice? They break into curses of this new generation of gods, Zeus, Apollo and Athene, who have trampled underfoot the Right which the Erinyes championed and robbed them of their birthright and office. Here it is that the new religion shows its wisdom and moderation. Old ideas cannot be abolished but they can be turned to more profitable ways. So the Erinyes, deprived of the right to smell out murder, will better protect the homes of mankind while they live. They will be called Eumenides, the kindly ones, and receive honour from men along with Athene herself. In the end they acquiesce and gladly become reconciled to the rule of Zeus.

---

[29] Tr. R. C. Trevelyan.

[30] It is worth noting here that shortly before the production of the play the powers and privileges of the court of the Areopagus had been severely reduced by the democratic party. The *Eumenides* is a protest against this.

Sophocles

Already before his death the plays of Æschylus were becoming a little old-fashioned. Neither his politics nor his theology appealed to the Athenian democracy. Cimon was dead; the generation that knew the glory of the fight for Hellas against the Barbarian was passing away. Few cared any longer for Greece; each state aimed only at its own advancement, and narrow-minded nationalism reigned instead of a broader patriotism. The disasters that this was to bring were as yet unknown. Athens was at the height of her power, mistress of a vast empire and drawing rich revenues from so-called allies. Pericles was making her beautiful and travellers came from all parts to see the city, one of whose chief attractions was the dramatic performances at the Dionysia. In a society where so much was done by slaves, every citizen had leisure for politics, literature and philosophy; and probably no more intelligent and gifted society has ever existed than fifth-century Athens. We have already seen (Part III) how the Athenians responded to the intellectual stimulus of the Sophists. But though some of the Sophists attacked the gods, it would be a mistake to imagine that the Athenians in general ceased to believe in their gods merely because of the attacks of Xenophanes and the speculations of the physicists; on the contrary, they punished atheism with exile and death. Moreover, their religion, especially the worship of Athene, was closely bound up with national sentiment, and the condemnations for atheism in the latter half of the fifth century were largely political. Thus the audience which enjoyed the plays of Sophocles was no less loyal to the official religion than the earlier generation, and if Sophocles was less pre-occupied than Æschylus with the understanding of the divine rule, it was because the divine rule seemed to him to require no explanation or defence. But if problems of theology did not attract Sophocles or his audience, they were not less interested in questions of right and wrong, without which tragedy is impossible.

Sophocles was born at Colonus, a suburb of Athens, about 495 B.C. He was thus old enough to remember the invasion of 480 when the inhabitants took refuge in Salamis. He grew up along with the Athenian Empire, worked and prospered as a dramatist during the height of its power, and lived long enough to see part of the final stages of the struggle in which it fell. He played his part as a citizen of the democracy; in 443 he was a financial officer of the Confederacy and in 440 he saw service as a general in the revolt of Samos. Handsome and popular, generous towards his rivals, he was altogether a fitting friend for Herodotus. In his long and successful career he won many prizes. He was skilled in stagecraft, which developed greatly under his influence. Though the practice of writing trilogies around a single story like the *Oresteia* was not entirely abandoned — other playwrights kept it up — Sophocles does not follow it. In the subjects of his plays he followed tradition; the cycles of the myths, especially the Theban and the Trojan, were his main source. He chose no modern historical subjects and his rendering of the ancient stories does not betray any marked political bias and few allusions of any kind to contemporary events. Yet he was more interested in his fellow-men than Æschylus, who was inclined to regard them only as they appeared in relation to divine laws. Sophocles is interested in them as individuals. While equally religious he is a keener student of the human than of the divine will.

The earliest extant or partly extant work of Sophocles is not a tragedy but a satyr-play, the *Ichneutæ*, about half of which has been brought to light by a papyrus found in Egypt.[31] The title means something like "hounds in cry"; the chorus of satyrs is so called because they are pursuing the thief-god Hermes who stole Apollo's cattle. The mutilated state of the text makes it difficult to appreciate this play; but it is a welcome addition to our knowledge of satyric drama, of which before 1911 Euripides' *Cyclops* was the only example. Among the lost plays of Sophocles was one entitled Πλύντριαι, "girls at washing." The subject was taken from Odyssey vi. and the part of Nausicaa taken by the handsome young poet himself. Light though it sounds, it was not a satyr-play but a tragedy, and it would be extremely interesting to know how such a theme was treated. Certainly no one could have done it as well as Sophocles.

The "Ajax"

Of the hundred and twenty-three tragedies which Sophocles is said to have written we have only seven. The earliest of these is probably the *Ajax*. Three actors are required but the addition of the third is not yet fully exploited; the exact date is unknown. The hero, Aias son of Telamon, is king of Salamis, one of the mightiest of the Achæans in the *Iliad*, and the chorus is composed of Salaminians who have accompanied him to Troy. Achilles is now dead. His famous armour was to become the property of the greatest among the Achæans after Achilles, and before the play opens it had been adjudged to Odysseus. Ajax, whose fighting strength was admittedly the greatest, is burning with indignation at such a slight to his honour. The scene is first outside Ajax's tent, later a remote place by the sea. The prologue is not spoken by the hero, who does not appear until after the entry of Athene and Odysseus, who are respectively the divine and the human agents in the tragedy. For from them we learn that on the previous night Ajax in a fit of madness, sent by Athene, had slaughtered sheep and cattle under the delusion that he was killing Agamemnon and Menelaus and the other Achæans who had slighted him.

---

[31] *Ox. Pap.*, ix. 1174; Jebb and Pearson, *Fragments*, vol. i, p. 224 ff.

The first appearance of Ajax is typically Sophoclean in that it is full of pity. Not only does the unhappy man think he has slain the Atreidæ but he thinks that the old sheep in his tent, trussed up for scourging and slaying, is his enemy Odysseus. Ajax retires again before the entry of the chorus, his loyal followers. Reluctantly they admit that their leader has been struck mad. When Ajax returns the madness is past; he is puzzled and distressed by what he has done, and — a very human touch — burning with anger at the thought of Odysseus laughing at him. Utterly ashamed, he cannot face the Achæans and he knows, for his fit of madness shows it, that the gods hate him too. He therefore speaks of death to the consternation of the chorus and Tecmessa. She brings in their little son Eurysaces, and the father's farewell to the boy is a scene of great pathos but brief and restrained. Sophocles did not violate the doctrine of "nothing too much." When Tecmessa and the child retire and Ajax goes into his tent, the chorus sing a song of great beauty. The grandeur of the Æschylean lyric has given way to a verse of wonderful sweetness and light. Ajax returns sword in hand, but professes his intention of burying it in a remote place and submitting loyally to the Atreidæ. The scene is full of dramatic irony, for the audience know his real intention, but the chorus are deceived and, when he goes off, sing a song of joyous relief which further heightens the coming tragedy. It was unavoidable that the chorus should appear to be stupid but Sophocles has turned it skilfully to account. They are first alarmed at a message from Teucer, Ajax's kinsman and now almost his only friend. They are bidden to see that Ajax is not allowed out of sight. The seer Calchas has given a warning that the mania is not yet over and may prove suicidal or, in other words, that the wrath of Athene who sent the madness is not yet appeased. We learn too that all during the war Ajax had been insolent and overweening towards Athene, had even boasted that his power needed no help from the gods. There is nothing of this in the *Iliad*, but the addition is illuminating. It explains the continued wrath of Athene and makes the character and conduct of Ajax more understandable: his furious violence is the result of his insulted megalomania. He was unable to carry with moderation the gift of immense physical strength. Yet he is human enough. When the scene shifts to the lonely spot by the shore, he speaks with affection of his parents in Salamis though he calls down curses on the Atreidæ. He falls upon his sword before our eyes, the chorus arriving too late. This is the only instance in extant Greek tragedy of a death taking place as part of the visible action. It is enough however to discredit the notion that the Greeks were too fastidious to allow it. The reason why there were no murders on the Greek stage is to be found in the origin of acting; it was no part of the answerer to slay or be slain; besides, the presence of the chorus made it impossible. In the case of a suicide it was necessary that his last words should be spoken while he is alone; hence the change of scene and the temporary absence of the chorus. Now the death of Ajax takes place before the play is two-thirds over. It would be a mistake to regard this as a defect. Æschylus might have ended a play here and continued the story in another. But, as we have seen, Sophocles preferred to make his plays complete in themselves. The death of Ajax settles nothing; there is still a conflict. For after the laments of the chorus, Tecmessa and Teucer, there arrive first Menelaus, then Agamemnon, who forbid the burial of the corpse of the traitor who had tried to murder his chiefs. The importance which the Greeks attached to proper burial ought to convince us that there would be no falling off of interest until this question is settled. The fate of the dead body is finally decided by the generosity of Ajax's rival Odysseus who, to the surprise of both parties, mediates between Teucer and the Atreidæ and urges the proper burial of the corpse. The noble sentiments which Ajax had falsely uttered when he pretended to forgive the Atreidæ are now repeated in sincerity by Odysseus. The play is ended and Ajax shall receive the rites due to the dead.

The "Antigone"

The *Antigone*, one of the best loved and most beautiful of all Greek plays, was produced about 441, and the story is not incredible that Sophocles' election as general shortly after was a token of gratitude and esteem from the Athenian people.[32] We saw in the *Ajax* that the burial of a dead body was a duty which no prince or government was justified in refusing. To leave a corpse unburied was an unpardonable sin which offended Greek religious feeling more than anything else and it is not surprising that Sophocles should have turned again to this most humane precept of piety. When the brothers Eteocles and Polyneices, sons of Œdipus, had unwittingly slain each other in the war of the Seven against Thebes, Creon became king and, according to the Attic version of the story, which Sophocles follows, forbade under penalty of death the burial of the corpse of Polyneices who had fought against his own countrymen. Antigone, one of the dead man's sisters, resolves to defy the king's orders. She makes known her intention to her sister Ismene at the beginning of the play. Sophocles' skill and understanding are nowhere better demonstrated than in this character-study of the two sisters. Ismene is surprised at Antigone's boldness. Creon's cruel orders are no less abhorrent to her than to her sister, but they must be obeyed; the gods will surely pardon her refusal of due rites to the corpse since she acts under duress; she will therefore submit to the inevitable. Ismene has common sense on her side. "There is no sense," she says, "in doing unnecessary things" (68). Antigone in her turn is surprised; it had not occurred to her that there was any course open to Polyneices' nearest relatives but to pay him the last rites of burial. What Creon wishes is simply of no consequence. "I know," she says, "that I please those whom it is my chief duty to please" (89). So Antigone goes off alone and Ismene returns to the palace. As if in contrast to the tragic conflict which is now impending, a joyous song of deliverance from the recent danger is now sung by the chorus of Theban elders. Then they loyally greet their new king; they hear him defend his principle of government, that the safety of the state is his prime concern and that this demands the refusal of burial to a traitor. The chorus express no approval but neither do they question the right of Creon to govern on what principle he pleases (215). They promise to obey, since no man is so foolish as to be enamoured of death. It is the attitude of Ismene. The next scene begins in lighter mood and shows how the technique of play-writing has developed. While a certain unity of action is a necessity on the stage, too close a concentration on the immediate theme may easily become a serious blemish by producing barrenness and unreality. Interruptions and contrasts are true to life. One of the men set to watch the corpse now arrives. He is a born chatterbox, as Creon says (320). Excuses and explanations tumble from his lips with almost comic effect before he manages to announce that some unknown hand has sprinkled earth on the corpse — an act symbolical of actual burial. Creon's anger is increased by what he regards as a merely fatuous suggestion of the chorus that the gods themselves may have done this service to Polyneices. He knows that there are malcontents in the city. The choral song which follows is one of the finest of Sophocles' poems. Its theme is generally the ingenuity of man, his resourcefulness against all evils save death, and how this cleverness may be turned to evil as well as good. The song does not commit the chorus to either side in the conflict; their words might apply either to Creon or to the unknown culprit. But they are astounded when Antigone is brought in a prisoner, disobedient to the king's law. Unmoved by her piety they condemn her folly. The isolation of Antigone is now complete. The same garrulous soldier brings her in and tells how he and his comrades had removed the earth from the stinking corpse and had seen Antigone come a second time to complete the rites. Antigone makes an able defence before Creon but there is no yielding on either side; she must die. Ismene enters and Creon takes it for granted that she too is implicated. Instead of denying, Ismene offers to die with her sister but Antigone rightly will not allow her claim to do so. The character of the two girls is further contrasted. Ismene is not less but more affectionate than Antigone; common prudence, not coldness, had kept her from joining in the deed. Her last words to her had been of love (99) and now that Antigone is to die she cannot bear to be left alive. The prisoner on the other hand is brutally sarcastic at this change of front and totally unjust to Ismene, wantonly wounding her tenderest feelings in a way that would be quite unnecessary if her only object was to save her sister's life. Jealous of the glory of the death she has won, she has all the selfishness of martyrdom. Strong sense of duty, fearlessness and uprightness of character, not human affection[33] for a brother, had led her to do the deed which she would not have troubled to do for husband or child (904–920). Creon is unmoved even by a reminder from Ismene that Antigone is shortly to be married to his son Hæmon, whose interview with his father forms the next episode. Hæmon is his father's son. Putting the country's welfare first he points out that the execution of Antigone would arouse resentment among the entire people. Hæmon's moderation and good sense avail him not. Creon will not brook any interference: the will of the whole people is nothing to him. To this sheer despotism Hæmon's reply is that of a good democrat; that is no state which belongs to a single man. But the interview fails and we know before he leaves that Hæmon does not mean to survive his betrothed. Our last view of Antigone is just before she is taken away to be left to starve in a lonely rock-tomb. This scene, which is a lyrical dialogue between Antigone and the chorus, has a twofold value. First it brings us closer to Antigone herself; she is human and has no desire to leave life; she is not mad, though in the eyes of this world and the chorus she may be foolish. Moreover, the ancient Greeks had such a lively fear of death that they understood and appreciated better than we do the laments of one about to die. In the *Ajax* Sophocles changed the scene rather than omit the hero's farewell to life.

---

[32] It should be remembered that there were ten strategi at a time and that the office was civil as well as military.

---

[33] This is not to deny her love for her brother; she was right in saying *οὔτοι συνέχθειν, ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφυν*. But it was not the mainspring of her action.

So Antigone is taken away to her death. The play of course does not end thus; it would be no conclusion. But in a conflict between two such contrary points of view there could be no reconciliation; one of the two wills must be broken. It is Creon who is converted. The vain, superstitious and blustering tyrant is first alarmed then gradually convinced by the prophet Teiresias. He hastens to undo his wrong, to bury the body, then release Antigone. The corpse is buried but it is too late to save the girl. Rather than starve to death she has hanged herself. Hæmon, cursing his father, has slain himself beside her. The queen Eurydice also kills herself when she hears of her son's death. Creon is left an utterly broken man. The tragedy is now ended but the conclusion gives rise to a number of questions. That little or nothing is made of the love of Antigone and Hæmon is not surprising; it was not interesting to an Athenian audience; but we do ask (1) why, if the play is about Antigone, the centre of interest for at least the last quarter is Creon? (2) why he did not at once go and save Antigone and bury the body after? (3) why, if Creon saw his error, was it necessary for Antigone to die? Is this Sophocles' conception of divine justice? To the first question the answer is that the unity of the subject of a Greek play does not necessarily depend on a single character but on the theme of the whole. Creon's forbiddal of the burial is the mainspring of the entire action and the play cannot end until he has borne the consequences of his deed. Second, Creon went first to bury Polyneices because it was his most urgent duty to the state. Teiresias had said little of Antigone but a great deal to show that the safety of the state was endangered by the unburied corpse. To have acted otherwise would have been inconsistent with Creon's character. Lastly, though Antigone is unquestionably right in her lonely vindication of religious duty, her death is not to be laid at the door of the gods. She brought death upon herself by her own disobedience; she knew well what she did and was not ashamed of it. This is her greatness but it is also the cause of her death. Were it not so there would be no martyrs. People like Ismene obey and die in their beds; people like Antigone disobey and are put to death.

"Oedipus the King"

The famous play which Aristotle regarded as the most perfect Greek tragedy was not so favourably received by its first judges who awarded it only the second prize. Aristotle was always inclined to dwell more on plot than on character and certainly the horrible story of Œdipus provides ready made such a good plot for a tragedy that Æschylus,[34] Sophocles and Euripides in turn used it. Only Sophocles' attempt has come down to us. At the birth of Œdipus his parents, Laius king of Thebes and Jocasta, warned by an oracle that their son should slay his father and marry his mother, exposed the child. The herdsman entrusted with the task gave away the infant to a Corinthian and he was adopted and reared by Polybus king of Corinth whose son he believed himself to be. On attaining manhood he learned of the prophecy attached to his name and, still ignorant of his true parentage, left Corinth in order to avoid all possibility of the fulfilment of the oracle. As he was approaching Thebes he became involved in a quarrel on the highway where three roads meet. He slew four of his five opponents not knowing their leader to be his father Laius. The efforts of the Thebans to explain the disappearance of their king were unavailing. For fear of the consequences the one survivor of the slain band kept silence. Moreover, the city was distracted by a monster, the Sphinx, who devoured any one who failed to answer her riddle. When the young stranger Œdipus discovered the answer and so rid them of the monster, they hailed him as their new king. He married the widowed queen Jocasta, who thus became the mother of Eteocles, Polyneices, Antigone and Ismene. These events, the externals of the plot, are not part of Sophocles' play. They have all taken place some sixteen years before and their occurrence is only revealed in the course of the action. At the beginning of the play Œdipus is seen as a wise, just and happily married king; at the end he is a broken man, self-blinded and self-banished. It is not a little improbable that these facts should have remained hidden so long, but the dramatic effect of bringing the entire revelation into one day is worth the strain on our credulity, and the ignorance of the chief characters gives scope to the playwright who was the greatest master of dramatic irony. The irony is heightened by the fact that Œdipus is himself the chief instrument in his own downfall. His determination to rid the city of the pestilence by discovering the murderer of Laius sets in motion the whole relentless process. In a prologue we learn that the oracle of Pythian Apollo had declared the pestilence then raging to be due to the presence in the city of the man who had killed Laius. The chorus of Thebans enter and sing to the gods for deliverance. Œdipus returns, repeats his determination to avenge the murder of Laius "as I would for my own father's sake," and calls down curses on the murderer or anyone who shields him. The seer Teiresias is called in to help. He does not know why he has been summoned, else he would not have come; for he knows who killed Laius. At first he will not speak and when finally the truth is dragged out of him that Œdipus is the slayer, he is not believed by anyone. The king suspects a plot, accuses Creon, Jocasta's brother, of having paid Teiresias to assert Œdipus' guilt. He cross-questions Creon about his recollections of the time of Laius' death but gets no information. The two quarrel violently; Jocasta appears and puts an end to their wrangling. She remembers well enough that Laius was slain by robbers on the highway "where three roads meet." By these words her attempt to clear Œdipus revives his memory of a forgotten incident. On closer questioning his fear is increased. Jocasta allows that one of Laius' companions survived and told her the tale; he had spoken of a band of robbers, not a solitary traveller; there is still this hope that the king may be innocent. The next choral ode is far less confident than the previous one; now that suspicion centres on Œdipus, they no longer disbelieve Teiresias and censure those who like Jocasta doubt the veracity of Apollo's prophet. This ode about the fulfilment of oracles and prophecies also prepares the way for the next episode — the arrival of news from Corinth that Polybus, Œdipus' supposed father, is dead, so that the king now appears to have escaped the doom of the oracle which declared that he should kill his father. Œdipus is overjoyed; oracles are worthless, he declares, exultingly. Then he recalls the other prophecy, that he should wed his mother. The messenger from Corinth in all innocence assures Œdipus that the Corinthian king and queen were not his parents, since he himself had received the infant Œdipus from a Theban herdsman and taken him to Corinth. The hideous truth now begins to dawn on Jocasta who implores Œdipus to enquire no further. He, thinking she is only afraid lest his birth be proved ignoble, persists, and the unhappy queen rushes off in dismay. While the net is closing around Œdipus, the unsuspecting chorus rejoice at the discovery that their king may after all be one of them and not a foreigner. Next appears the herdsman, survivor of Laius' band. He proves to be the same man who had given the child to the Corinthian, a discovery which overshadows the original purpose of his summoning. Not knowing what hangs upon his answers he denies all knowledge of the Corinthian, fearing punishment for his disobedience now more than thirty years old. When finally Œdipus realizes that both the horrible prophecies had already been fulfilled he rushes horror-stricken away. After a choral lament a messenger from the palace reports that Jocasta has hanged herself and Œdipus stabbed out his own eyes. Then he himself appears, blinded and piteous. This final scene, horrible though it is, and with all the unhappy man's constant harping on parricide and incest, is a necessary counterpart to the opening scenes when he was a happy and prosperous monarch. Now he laments bitterly "What need had I of seeing, to whose sight nothing was good?" (1329). His final act is to take friendly leave of Creon and to entrust to his care the four unlucky children. Now when the chorus asked Oedipus why he had blinded himself, he replied at once that Apollo did it; his own hands were but the agency of divine punishment. In a sense this is perfectly true. The Apolline religion, with its emphasis on purity, is the basis of belief of the whole story, and but for Apollo nothing would have been revealed. It is vain to ask why Œdipus is punished for sins of which he had no knowledge. Man may not cross-question the gods, and the Œdipus of Sophocles claims no such right. He was an able and just ruler, but parricide and incest, even if unwitting, bring their inevitable retribution. This is but a statement of fact; no man could do what Œdipus did and not pronounce himself unclean and outcast. He may have aggravated his offence by his lack of faith in Apollo and his prophet, but that is not the real reason for his punishment. Nothing, we know from the outset, can save him from the effects of his great sins.

---

[34] The *Œdipus* of Æschylus is the second play of the trilogy which ended with the *Septem*. Sophocles' play is complete in itself according to his usual method.

The "Philoctetes"

All three dramatists wrote tragedies about Philoctetes; that of Sophocles, which is the latest of the three (409), is again the only survivor, but we know enough of the outline of the other two to enable us to observe some of the differences of treatment. Philoctetes, bitten by a snake and festering with disease, had been put ashore on the island of Lemnos by the Greek leaders on their way to Troy. Ten years later they learn that Troy can never be taken without Philoctetes and the bow and arrows which Heracles had given him. The wily Odysseus, though of all the Achæan leaders Philoctetes hated him most, is entrusted with the task of fetching him. His years of suffering had bred in Philoctetes increased bitterness and wrath with the Greeks who had abandoned him. In Æschylus' play Odysseus contrives to avoid recognition. Euripides introduces a rival embassy from the Trojans, thus making a play of argument and counter-argument which was very popular at Athens. The outstanding feature of Sophocles' handling of the story is the character of Neoptolemus, son of the now dead Achilles. He accompanies Odysseus to Lemnos knowing that he is destined to help in the capture of Troy but not that he will be powerless unless he have Philoctetes and his bow. At the beginning only Odysseus knows this; he prevails upon Neoptolemus to pretend that he, like Philoctetes, has had unfair treatment from the Atreidæ, hoping so to win the favour of Philoctetes. In Sophocles' play the island is supposed to be uninhabited, and the chorus consists not of Lemnians, as in Æschylus and Euripides, but of veterans of Achilles now under the command of Neoptolemus. The miserable diseased man is overjoyed to see human beings and to find that they are Greeks. He implores Neoptolemus to take him home. Odysseus is in hiding and has observed that events are taking the wrong course. Without yet appearing himself he contrives to send word that the presence at Troy of Philoctetes and his bow is necessary for the capture of the city. Philoctetes is more eager than ever to go home; he will give no assistance to those who had wronged him. The young Neoptolemus is torn in two directions: his duty to the army and to Odysseus urges him to take Philoctetes to Troy, his sympathy for the wounded man to take him home. Odysseus is crafty, unscrupulous and pitiless; his own object is to get the man at all costs. Philoctetes is obstinate in his refusal. Between the two stands the noble son of Achilles, the study of whose character is the chief interest of the play. He admits that Philoctetes must be brought to Troy, but objects to Odysseus' deceitful methods and will only bring Philoctetes with his own consent. He is unable to convince either obstinate party and the issue is finally decided by the appearance of a *deus ex machina* in the person of Heracles, the original donor of the bow. He alone can convince Philoctetes that it is his duty to go to Troy and that he will be rewarded by cure of his disease. Philoctetes consents. Thus it is Neoptolemus who is vindicated, not Odysseus. The "god from the machine," much used by

Euripides, is not a mere clumsy device for evading awkward situations. If the will of the gods is to be done, it must be revealed. The intervention of Heracles in the *Philoctetes* is not essentially different from the intervention of Teiresias in the *Antigone.*

The "Electra"

The murder of Clytæmnestra and Ægisthus was another subject which the three dramatists used, Æschylus in the *Choephori,* the other two in plays entitled *Electra.* We are fortunate in possession of all three. In the *Choephori* Electra is a minor character, Orestes and his mother are the centre of interest. Sophocles saw the tragic possibilities of the unfortunate Electra who had had to live under the same roof as her father's murderess and her hated paramour and in whom years of lonely brooding and vain longing had warped and hardened a generous soul. Naturally affectionate she has stifled all tender feeling out of a mistaken sense of duty to her dead father. Her one hope is that Orestes will return, and when a report is brought that he is dead, she even resolves to kill Ægisthus herself. Her sister Chrysothemis, whom Sophocles introduces into the story, is a kind of foil to her, as Ismene to Antigone. She has by submission contrived to make life in the palace tolerable. To Electra such conduct, however prudent, is base and disloyal. With the moral and theological aspect of the murders Sophocles is less concerned than Æschylus, but this does not mean that he approved of them. The play is true to life, not to dogma. The question is scarcely even raised whether Orestes had right on his side. He shares Electra's false notions of loyalty and had been brought up to believe that it was his duty to avenge his father's death and the oracle of Apollo seemed to support him. He was the rightful heir and Ægisthus had usurped his place. As a character in the play he is almost without interest. Not so Clytæmnestra who argues and quarrels with Electra as they must have done many times before; she is less majestic and overpowering than the Clytæmnestra of Æschylus, who would not stoop to bandy words. But the chief purpose of the early scenes between the queen and her daughter is to show us the kind of life that Electra has been leading for many years in the house of her hostile mother. The subject of Sophocles' *Electra* is not murder but the making of a murderess.

The "Trachiniae"

The *Women of Trachis* is the story of the death of Heracles, unwittingly slain by his wife Deianeira. Heracles in the play is not a god and his subsequent apotheosis is not actually mentioned. For over a year he has been absent from their home in Trachis. When he departed he left her an oracular message that at the end of fifteen months he would either return and live at peace thereafter or that he would die. Their eldest son Hyllus hears that his father is in Eubœa fighting against the city of Œchalia. This is the first news of him for fifteen months. Hyllus goes to join him. Further news comes to Trachis that Heracles has been victorious and will soon be home. He has sent on before him his steward Lichas who brings in a train of captives led by Iole the beautiful princess of Œchalia. Heracles' passion for her was his real object in the war. At first this fact is kept from Deianeira; when she knows it she has no less pity for the speechless Iole than for the other captives; but the loss of her husband's love and the thought of what his homecoming will mean now make her desperate. She has recourse to a supposed love-charm given her long ago by Nessus the Centaur whom Heracles slew. In this she soaks a shirt and sends it to Heracles bidding him wear it when he is sacrificing to Zeus. The liquid is in reality a deadly poison when exposed to light and heat, as Deianeira presently discovers when she observes the wad she had used lying in the sunlight consumed to powder. Her fears are confirmed when Hyllus returns and accuses his mother of murder. His father is dying in torment. The horror-struck queen stung with remorse departs to end her own life but not until she has explained her innocent motive. The dying Heracles is afterwards brought in. He learns that his wife is blameless, demands that his body be burned on Mount Œta without waiting for his death and asks his son to marry Iole. Thus the two chief characters never meet. Added to this there is much improbability in the way in which the characters come and go between Trachis and Eubœa; several days must be supposed to elapse between the beginning of the play and the death of Heracles. Deianeira is a beautiful character finely drawn but the play as a whole is a study rather than a drama, a study of the power of love (497–530). Not only Heracles' passion for Iole but Deianeira's innocent love for her husband and even his first passion for her when he saved her from the Centaur, all contribute to the tragedy.

"Oedipus at Colonus"

About 409 the aged poet, his closing years saddened by domestic troubles and national disaster, gave expression to his longing for peace in the *Œdipus Coloneus*. The old blind king is seeking where he may end his days in tranquillity. An oracle has declared that the country that harbours his dead body shall prosper exceedingly. The scene is laid in a grove at Colonus, Sophocles' own birthplace near Athens. Hither comes Œdipus led by Antigone who describes the place to him. A stranger from the village tells them that Theseus of Athens is their king and that the grove is sacred to the Eumenides. Œdipus is attracted. Apollo had told him that he should find rest with the Kindly Ones. The chorus, elders of Colonus, come to see the suppliant who had dared to approach the grove. They are horrified to learn that he is Œdipus; but Theseus appears and assures Œdipus that Athens will not reject his supplication. The chorus now sing praise of Athens in a beautiful little song (668–719). But all is not over; Creon appears from Thebes demanding his return. Œdipus is greatly indignant; his sons and kinsfolk had made life intolerable for him at home[35]; they only want him back because of what people say and in order to profit by his lucky presence. Creon threatens violence to Ismene, whom he has captive, and to Antigone, whom he tries to carry off. However Theseus again intervenes and the girls are saved. Then appears another of Œdipus' children, Polyneices, now engaged in preparing war against his brother Eteocles. As elder son he appeals for his father's help. Œdipus curses both his ungrateful sons and foretells their mutual slaying. Finally he declares that his end has come. Unguided he leads the way to the place where he is to die and be buried. Only Theseus is allowed to go with him and know his last resting-place, in order that Athens may be sure of keeping him for ever. The Œdipus at Colonus is a vindication of the unfortunate king whose guilt had been none of his own doing. Throughout the play he seems to go from strength to strength until in the final scenes, in spite of his blindness and approaching death, he holds sway over all the rest.

---

[35] Sophocles here follows a different version of the story; in the *Œdipus Rex* he banished himself from Thebes.

Euripides

Our meagre information about the life of Euripides is the more unfortunate because as a man he is more interesting than Sophocles. Often misunderstood during his lifetime he exercised a greater influence on subsequent literature than either of his rivals. After his death his plays were often revived and citations from Euripides in later writers outnumber those from Æschylus and Sophocles together. He was a skilled musician and set his songs to airs long remembered from the Ægean to Sicily. In the construction and dramatic presentation of his plays he had little to add to his predecessors. He invented the *deus ex machina* and made great use of prologue and epilogue, but what is far more important is that he threw the whole weight of his intellect and his personality into all his work. Æschylus prided himself on being a soldier; Sophocles was a distinguished servant of his country, living the full life of a good citizen. Euripides was different from other people, and, in spite of Pericles' proud boast,[36] peculiarity tended to make a man disliked. He had not the knack of carrying off his eccentricity. He performed his military service as he was obliged to, but for the rest he avoided politics and kept to himself and his few chosen friends, who probably included Protagoras and Anaxagoras.[37] He did not take in good part the malicious jokes that were made about his secluded life, and so admirably did he lend himself to ridicule that the ludicrous situations in which Aristophanes used to depict him passed afterwards for sober facts about his life. The notion that his mother sold vegetables, and bad ones at that, has no basis in fact. He was born about 484. In his youth he saw performed the tragedies of Æschylus and when in 455, the year of the *Oresteia*, he produced his first play, Sophocles was in full vigour and had most of his career before him. Yet he seems to belong to a different generation from his rival and to have lived in a different world of ideas, a world in which every principle both of religion and morality had to stand the test of a public examination. Discussion and argument are naturally frequent in Greek drama but neither of the other two dramatists ever made the stage so much like a philosophical debating-room as Euripides or put into the mouths of their characters arguments directed against the moral standards and religious beliefs of his countrymen. Many of the sophists were attacking conventional standards and advancing ideas subversive of existing morality, but they did not use the theatre of Dionysus for the purpose, did not put wicked words into the mouths of old legendary heroes and make them speak like fifth-century Athenians. So while the majority of the sophists were allowed to argue as they pleased, Euripides incurred much odium from an influential section of Athenian society. There is, however, much exaggeration in the reports of his unpopularity. The majority of citizens, while ready enough to laugh at Aristophanes' satire, must have found the plays of Euripides novel and interesting even while they disapproved of them. Certainly outside Athens his plays and songs were appreciated. One has only to recall the story of the Athenian prisoners in Sicily whose lot was lightened because they knew much of Euripides by heart. Much of Aristophanes' satire and parody would have fallen flat if the audience had not known their Euripides well. Like Socrates he had powerful and bitter enemies, who hated him because they feared him and who if they could would have put him to death. There is a story that he was arraigned like Anaxagoras for impiety, but with what result we do not know. Yet his enemies were not entirely unsuccessful; they seem to have made life at Athens intolerable for him. Some of the unfair comic attacks hurt him deeply; lines reft from their context were cited as the author's opinions. Some of his later plays, written after the Sicilian expedition had begun (see below, p. 263), were full of the aimlessness and futility of war, of which the war-party did not like to be reminded. He had made enemies among oligarchs and democrats alike; so when in 408 he received an invitation to join the literary circle at the court of king Archelaus of Macedon, the seventy-five-year-old poet left Athens for Macedon. There he wrote three plays before he died in 406. Almost immediately a reaction in his favour began at Athens. The aged Sophocles caused his chorus to appear in mourning. The posthumous *Bacchæ* was awarded first prize, an honour which had only four times before fallen to Euripides in his long career, and only to one other of the eighteen extant tragedies.

---

[36] Thuc., ii. 37. 2.

---

[37] He was prosecuted by Cleon for holding impious Anaxagorean views. Satyrus' *Life of Euripides*. See *Ox. Pap.*, ix. 1176, 37, 3.

Euripides produced his first play in 455 and won his first prize in 441. To this early period belong in all probability certain satyr-plays, one of which, the *Cyclops* (442) has come down to us. The subject is taken from the *Odyssey*, the dealings of Odysseus with the one-eyed Cyclops Polyphemus, but the treatment is more frankly comic. A good deal of amusement is extracted from a chorus of satyrs led by Silenus who will do anything for a drink. Odysseus, who is well supplied with wine, secures their assistance and Polyphemus is duped. Not every trilogy was followed by a satyr-play. Its place was sometimes taken by an ordinary play in lighter vein than the usual tragedy. Such was the *Alcestis*, produced in 438. The subject is one which Phrynichus had already used for a similar purpose, but while the play of Phrynichus was sheer burlesque, the *Alcestis* of Euripides is a mixture of pathos and humour. Slightly altering the old folk-tale of a young bride dying to save her husband, he heightens the poignancy of the story by making Alcestis the mother of children. Her husband Admetus must die that day unless he can find a substitute. His aged parents have refused and his dutiful wife offers herself. Arrayed for her funeral she takes leave of her children, beseeching her husband not to import a stepmother for them. We have here a foretaste of the later Euripides. Admetus is an aristocratic prince who all his life has never had to do anything against his will. Everything had been made easy for him; he has never had to make a sacrifice before and is thoroughly indignant at the refusal of his parents to die in his stead. He accepts as a matter of course his wife's noble offer. This cavalier attitude of aristocratic young men, especially their treatment of women, aroused the indignation of Euripides and all through his career he attacks it. In this play Admetus' old father Pheres, stung by the taunts of his selfish son, effectively turns the tables on The Man Who Murdered his Wife. Meanwhile Heracles, an old friend of the family, has come and Admetus entertains him with the hospitality which is a virtue of the noble and does not tell him of the sorrows of the household. While he is feasting within, Alcestis is led away for burial and the chorus leave the orchestra.[38] Then he learns the truth from a servant. Stung with remorse at his own riotous behaviour he becomes sober again in an instant and goes off to rescue Alcestis from the clutches of Death. The play ends with an amusing scene in which Heracles brings back Alcestis heavily veiled. He pretends she is a captive and asks Admetus to take her in. He, full of compunction and mindful of his promise to Alcestis, at first refuses, especially as her form reminds him of his dead wife. Finally the veil is removed and all ends happily.

---

[38] A dramatic necessity. In the *Helena* at v. 385 Helen and the chorus leave the scene empty.

"Medea" (431)

The next extant play is the *Medea*, seven years later. The philosopher poet had, it seems, followed up a line of thought which he had previously touched in the *Alcestis*. The position of women at Athens in his own day was no better than that of Alcestis and an Admetus could be found in almost any group of Athenians. He therefore looked farther afield in legend than Æschylus or Sophocles in order to find themes which should illustrate the fact that women had both feelings and intelligence. It may seem that such information would be superfluous to an audience acquainted with the character sketches of Sophocles. But even Antigone had no other thought than her duty to the male members of her family. To Euripides such an attitude was wrong or at all events psychologically inadequate. Women are not all cast in the mould which Pericles designed for them.[39] Sophocles' ideal of a virtuous and faithful wife, Deianeira, must have seemed to Euripides merely a blundering idiot. He knew better than Sophocles how a woman whose loyal love is suddenly rejected is likely to act towards her rival and so he wrote the *Medea*. "How he must hate women to depict them thus. He seems to know wicked women so well that they must be his constant companions." So said the complacent Athenians. In Medea's vindication of her sex they saw nothing but the ravings of a rebellious woman.

Jason had grown tired of the Colchian princess who had helped him to win the Golden Fleece. He owed his position and reputation to her but he had now secretly married the daughter of the Corinthian king Creon and has thus secured the succession for himself. His new father-in-law insists that the barbarian Medea must leave the country. Medea is a witch and Creon is afraid of her and only after much flattery and pretended submission is he persuaded to allow Medea to stay one more day. In a manner typically Euripidean she debates with herself plans for spending that day in revenge and murder. When Jason appears, magnanimous in his own eyes, offering to make amends by doing the right thing and giving her money, Medea vents her fury on him and his ingratitude for her services; her plight is wretched, there is nowhere in the world where she can go. Jason's replies, if they were not so seriously meant, would be almost laughable; he is marrying for money and position, like other men; in fact he almost convinces himself that he has married for the sake of Medea's children by him; for if Medea had been quiet and sensible, they might all have been allowed to stay. Perhaps by way of softening the attack for his own countrymen Euripides now introduces Ægeus, king of Athens. He, though a man, is indignant at the conduct of Creon and Jason and offers Medea an asylum. She accepts his offer gladly but uses it to further her plans. This intervention of a kind of good uncle of fairy-tale is a little unconvincing but without it Medea could not have made the pretended reconciliation on which her plans depend. Her intention is to send her two children with a present for Jason's new wife, a poisoned robe which she hopes will kill both her and her father. Instead of slaying Jason she decides to slay their children, a more subtle revenge. Jason is deceived by her words of submission and is genuinely glad when Medea suggests that Creon might be persuaded to allow them to stay. The robe is sent and the children return. Medea in another long monologue argues with herself about the slaying of the children. This murder is Euripides' own addition to the existing legend and we are made to feel that the question whether the children shall die is one of vital importance. And so it is. For Euripides while making us sympathize with Medea wishes also to show us to what lengths cruelty and oppression can drive a violent and passionate woman. "I know," says Medea, "that what I do is wrong; but temper [40] is stronger than my counsels, temper that is the cause of mankind's greatest miseries (1078–1080)." With daring skill Euripides makes to follow a quiet choral ode which starts with the theme that culture and refinement belong as much to women as to men and proceeds to count happy the childless. The play now moves to its close; a messenger brings the news that Creon and his daughter have both died of Medea's poison. This success adds to her determination to kill the children herself lest they fall into the hands of Creon's avengers. But the decision to slay them had been made long before, as a result of *θυμός* not of reason. To make her find a reason afterwards is true to life. Behind the doors cries are heard from the children being slain. The comments of the chorus strike the reader as inane and laughable at such a tragic moment. But it was not their function to interfere with the action. The words of the chorus together with those of the children are a choral ode, filling in the inevitable interval far better than a blank silence. The modern equivalent would be a curtain. The final scene is between Medea and Jason. Here some means had to be found of preventing Jason from killing Medea on the spot. Hence her appearance in a magic carriage sent by Helios the Sun. It would have been possible for Medea to flee at once to Athens but the end would have been tame in comparison with the last violent exchange of words between the two chief characters. The chorus is handled with skill throughout, playing as it were an accompaniment to the theme of the suffering and oppression of women. They are Corinthian women but they regard her not as a foreigner but as one of womankind like themselves.

---

[39] "Not to fall below the qualities natural to your sex is great glory for you, and to be as little talked of as possible, whe ther for good or bad, among men." Thuc., ii. 45.

---

[40] One word alone cannot translate θυμός, which is the passionate, irrational side of human nature.

"Hippolytus"

Three years later (428) Euripides produced what is perhaps his masterpiece and certainly one of his most influential plays, the *Hippolytus*, which won first prize. The story of Phædra and her passion for her stepson Hippolytus has ever since been a favourite with tragic writers of many countries. Euripides himself had already made a play [41] about it, in which he gave Phædra a very different character from the present play and depicted her as an erotic woman who thrust herself upon the young man. The Phædra of the second *Hippolytus* is modest, reserved and anxious to save her good name and her husband's. In the *Medea* we saw one way in which spurned love may affect a woman; in the *Hippolytus* we see another way and of course a very different kind of woman. In the *Medea* we saw the clash of two human desires and wills, but the conflict in the *Hippolytus* is one of divinities or, if we prefer to put it so, of ideals. Aphrodite represents love, with all that is bad as well as all that is good in it; her power is immense and universally recognized. But the idea of personal chastity, represented by Artemis, has also a very strong appeal; and the conflict between these two divinities is not confined to Greek religion but is constantly recurring in human experience. Hence the perpetual interest in this story. In the play the divinities inevitably appear as persons but they are very different from the gay gentry of the Homeric Olympus. The prologue of the play is spoken by Aphrodite and summarizes the situation after the Euripidean manner. Theseus king of Athens had married Phædra a Cretan princess. He had already a grown-up son, Hippolytus by name, who was an ardent devotee of Artemis, spending all his time hunting. He took no interest in the other sex, that is to say, he paid little respect to the goddess of love. Aphrodite is therefore resolved to teach him a lesson. Already some months before, when the young queen first became acquainted with her stepson, Aphrodite had inspired her with a passion for him. She reveals the fact that her plan of punishment involves the death of Phædra as well as that of Hippolytus. To her that is of no importance, provided her fame is vindicated (50). She does not reveal, or does not know, whether Hippolytus will yield, but either way her plan is sure to succeed. We must however beware of supposing that the goddesses are merely characters in the play and that the whole action depends on a petty jealousy. To take no notice of the power of Aphrodite, to suppose that for oneself at any rate such things do not exist is an attitude of mind which may have results no less evil than the neglect of Artemis.

---

[41] The lost Ἱππόλυτος καλυπτόμενος. The extant play is Ἱππόλυτος στεφανηφόρος.

The love-sick Phædra is wasting away; the cause of her malady is unknown to the chorus and to Phædra's aged nurse who accompanies her, but a chance word leads gradually to the discovery of her guilty secret. Phædra tells of all her unhappy wrangling with herself, how she tried to shake off this passion and be a virtuous wife; but the power of love has proved too strong and she is resolved to die rather than speak. The nurse, though shocked at first, listens to Phædra again and makes up her mind, as old servants do, that whatever her dear mistress wants she must have; to save her life is all that matters. She puts her case with ingenious subtlety. She claims to stand for common sense; she does not counsel immorality for its own sake but only when it is necessary, as here, for the saving of a life. "It is the man you need, not this high-sounding moral talk," she says bluntly (490). Finally, seeing that Phædra is adamant, she goes off pretending that she has medicines which will alleviate the distress but in reality to tell Hippolytus the truth under a strict vow of secrecy. This is followed naturally enough by a choral ode on the power of Love, one of Euripides' best songs (525–564). Angry words are heard within the palace and Phædra realizes what the nurse has done. She is confronted by Hippolytus enraged and disgusted, half-minded to break his oath and tell all abroad. He makes a bitter attack on all women, mistress and servant alike, above all on intelligent women; if men must have wives let them be stupid and cow-like and stay fast in their homes (637 ff.). It is the Periclean ideal of womanhood again. The nurse's plan has failed and Phædra's resolve to die is strengthened. Within the palace she hangs herself. When the body is revealed to the grief-stricken Theseus, he finds a letter stating that the reason for her suicide was that Hippolytus had violated her. Theseus calls upon his father Poseidon to grant him the fulfilment of a wish as he had promised and wishes for the death of the boy. The scene which follows between father and son is a skilful piece of work; Theseus' attack is just the kind which a man in high dudgeon would make, accusing Hippolytus not merely of hypocrisy and villainous conduct but, without any sense of proportion or regard for truth, of being guilty of vegetarianism, Orphism and all the king's pet abominations, which he vaguely connects with his son's ascetic practices. Hippolytus is more composed; his self-defence savours, as so many Euripidean speeches do, of the law courts. He keeps his oath and will not reveal the cause of Phædra's suicide but swears a great oath that he is innocent. He is dumbfounded when the father whom he genuinely loves, refusing all trial or enquiry, banishes him forthwith. While driving along the coastal road to Argos the exiled youth and his chariot are overwhelmed by a huge wave. Poseidon has fulfilled Theseus' wish. The king at first rejoices at the news but Artemis appears and tells him the truth. Theseus she pardons since he acted in ignorance and Aphrodite was to blame. The dying youth is brought in and at Artemis' request pronounces his father guiltless of murder before he sinks back and dies. The intervention of Artemis was necessary not merely to avoid leaving Theseus unaware of the truth, which the chorus could have told him, but to clear him of guilt. Moreover it is a counterpart to Aphrodite's appearance at the beginning. But while human affairs could be patched up, the conflict of the deities persists and two noble human lives are lost. That is the impression which this fine play leaves and which Euripides must have intended it to leave. He is not an atheist; such divinities as Aphrodite, or Dionysus in the *Bacchæ*, obviously exist and exercise their power. If it be asked why guilty love should be thus depicted when innocent could as well have illustrated the conflict, it may be answered first that that was the story,[42] second that Phædra saw Hippolytus every day since he came to the palace: a foreign princess or captive girl could not have been made the instrument of Aphrodite's revenge, lastly that love takes no heed of accidental relationships and very great heed of constant proximity.

---

[42] In a lost play *Stheneboia* Euripides dealt with a similar theme, the passion of Stheneboia for her husband's friend Bellerophon, the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

Earlier War Plays

When the *Hippolytus* was produced the Peloponnesian War had been in progress more than two years. Euripides like a loyal citizen turned his skill to his country's service. He did not write martial plays inciting to fight but strove to show indirectly that their cause was good: Athens will embrace the cause of justice even at great risk to herself. She had done so in the distant past when the children of Heracles, still persecuted by their father's taskmaster, Eurystheus of Argos, appealed to her for a refuge. This is the theme of the *Heracleidæ* (427?), a somewhat mutilated play of desire for peace and of the necessity of war when international justice is violated by a strong power. Reference to the current war is even more direct in the *Andromache* in which the conduct of Menelaus is used to justify an attack on the Spartan nation; they are "most detestable," "princes of lies," "with never an honest thought but all twisted," "saying one thing and meaning another." These attacks on Spartan honesty suggest that the play may have been written in 423 when Brasidas was guilty of a breach of truce, but there is nothing to date it with certainty. It may belong to any year between 428 and 423. However that may be, the attempt to combine anti-Spartan feeling with a study of the captive Andromache has not been entirely successful. This is not because patriotic subjects were unsuited to the Athenian stage, on the contrary, but because the materials have been badly mixed. The grammarians say that the *Andromache* was not produced at Athens at all. Towards the end of the Ten Years' War Euripides wrote his *Suppliant Women*. At the end of the war of the Seven against Thebes the Thebans refused to bury the seven Argive chieftains who had fallen. Their relatives, including Adrastus, king of Argos, came to Athens to ask Theseus to help them. Theseus in this play is a good Athenian democrat and rejects with disdain the appellations of the Theban envoy, who at once replies with a defence of oligarchy and an attack on demagogues. All this, however irrelevant, was intensely interesting to the Athenians who were engaged in fighting for the principles of democracy. Euripides himself was no friend of the oligarchs at Athens but the herald's attack on demagogic government is very telling. At the end of the play when the Athenians have fought for Argos and won back the bodies, the Argives are expressly ordered by the goddess Athene to remain within their borders and never take the offensive in war again. The allusion is obvious; Argos was neutral, but it was doubtful how long she would remain so.

"Hecuba"

The finest play, however, of the early period of the war is the *Hecuba*, but it is not merely or even chiefly a war play. Among all Euripides' studies of feminine psychology the Sorrows of Hecuba hold a high place. Hecuba has none of Medea's barbaric madness. She is a normal woman in whom love of her children is turned into a lust for vengeance. She along with other Trojan women, who form the chorus, is a captive of the Greeks, who are encamped on the Chersonese before sailing for home. The ghost of Achilles has demanded the sacrifice of Polyxena, fairest daughter of Priam and Hecuba, and the Greeks after much debate have decided that this shall be done. Odysseus comes to take the girl; he is deaf to Hecuba's entreaties and her reminder that she had once saved his life when he came as a spy to Troy. Polyxena is ready to die; her only regret is that she leaves her mother alone. The manner of her death, her modesty and her courage, move the compassion of the Greek host. Hecuba, though still prostrate with grief when this is recounted to her, gives orders for the washing of the body before burial. The servant who had been charged with this task finds on the shore the body of a drowned man. This is Polydorus, Hecuba's youngest son, who at the beginning of the siege had been sent with a large sum of money to the custody of Polymnestor, king of Thrace. We have been prepared for this, first by the prologue, spoken by the ghost of the young man, explaining how when Troy fell Polymnestor slew him and threw him into the sea in order to get possession of the gold, second by Hecuba, who has been full of uneasy dreams and forebodings, while trying to console herself that she still has her youngest son alive. Hence this second blow is more than she can bear and the accumulation of sorrows more than she can believe. Polyxena's death was caused by the enemies of Troy but Polydorus has been treacherously slain by their ally. Seemingly powerless though she is, she plans her revenge. She is no longer a woman cast down by grief but a lioness robbed of her cubs. She enlists the sympathy of Agamemnon himself; publicly he cannot help her, for the Greeks have no quarrel with Polymnestor, but she skilfully plays on his love for Cassandra, whose brother's corpse is before his eyes, until she has made him promise not to interfere. Polymnestor and his two sons are invited to the camp and there is a remarkable and exciting scene. Hecuba is now complete mistress of herself and of the whole situation. She asks after her son and receives the Thracian king's lying answer with smiles. Knowing his greed of gold she lures him on with a tale of hidden treasure and induces him to part with his retinue. He and his two boys are trapped in the tents of the Trojan women, who contrive to separate the three. The sons are slain and their father's eyes put out. Hecuba has had her revenge, but as the blinded man appears, Agamemnon re-enters. He is in this play the representative of Greek notions of fair-play. He had spoken against the sacrifice of Polyxena and had done what he could for Hecuba. Now he hears both sides of the case — the kind of scene that Athenians loved — and pronounces Polymnestor guilty. The blinded king deals a parting thrust by prophesying the murder of Agamemnon and Cassandra and Hecuba's transformation into a dog. The *Hecuba* is one of the best constructed of Euripides' plays; the double disaster and the revenge are made to work in together and the chorus, captives in war like Hecuba herself, interpret her feelings in songs of beauty and tenderness. The ending prophecies may seem unnecessary to our taste but the audience expected references of this kind. They form an epilogue, looking forward as the prologue looks back, and give completeness to plays which have no sequel in the trilogy. Often the epilogue is spoken by a *deus ex machina* whose function is artistically no different from that of a human character speaking.

"Heracles"

In the *Hercules Furens* we have a different version of the death of Heracles from that told in Sophocles' *Trachiniæ*. Here the hero unexpectedly returns from Hades to rescue his aged father Amphitryon, his wife Megara and their children from Lycus who has slain Megara's father Creon. But Hera, always jealous of Heracles whose real father was Zeus, sends a fit of madness upon him in which he slays his wife and children. The chief interest in the play is the conclusion. Heracles has recovered from his madness and Theseus his friend, whom he has brought also out of Hades, is present. The awful murders have been ordered by Hera with the consent of Zeus. "Who," says Heracles, "could make a prayer to such a goddess?" Theseus concurs, indeed goes further than Heracles, who refuses to believe all the evil reports of the gods fabricated by poets. Such a discussion at such a time sounds strange and the Athenians as we have seen thought them out of place in the theatre; but Euripides, who was at least sixty when he wrote this play, had become more isolated as he grew older and less in touch with the point of view of the average citizen, both in religion and in attitude towards the war. The latter is well exemplified in the *Troades*, the former in one of his most interesting yet puzzling plays, the *Ion*.

"Ion"

In this play are to be found praise of Athens, sympathy for women, love of children, attacks on the morality of the gods; all are characteristic of Euripides but the motive of the play is not to be found in any one of these.

It is not written with any object or motive save to depict human life. Naturally it is life as Euripides sees it and his views strongly colour it but it is not a sermon or even a discussion. On reading the *Ion* we begin to understand how it was that from the plays of Euripides sprang so much of the New Comedy, the drama of everyday life. Substitute a human being for Apollo and we have the plot of many plays of various epochs. It is the situations, accidents of time and place (ll. 1508–1575) and not any tragic sorrow or passionate character that make the play. Euripides has freely adapted the legend of Ion, grandson of Erechtheus, founder of the Ionic race; first he has made the founders of the other Greek races, Dorian and Achæan, to be of Attic origin (1590 f.); and, more striking, he has made Apollo to be the father of Ion, so giving to the Ionic race, but not to the other two, a divine Apolline origin. This is an indirect criticism of Delphi which was by no means pro-Athenian in the war. Apollo is almost the villain of the piece. Creusa is the wife of Xuthus, who by his marriage to a daughter of Erechtheus has become king of Athens. They are childless and come to Delphi to enquire the reason. Years before, as we learn in the prologue spoken by Hermes, Apollo had violated Creusa. She bore a son in secret and exposed him; her hidden reason for coming to Delphi is to learn what has become of him. Apollo had indeed saved the child but had refused to own him, allowing him to be brought up an attendant in the temple in ignorance of his parentage. In the play he palms off the boy on the credulous Xuthus who is led to believe that this is his own son. Ion is taken aback and does not greatly like the effusive stranger who embraces him as his son. Creusa is stung with jealousy; she does not know who the boy is, but it is no answer to her prayer to discover that her husband has had a son by some unknown woman. Aided by an aged servant and her attendant women she plans to poison the boy. The plot is discovered by an accident. Ion would have had his own mother put to death but for the chance intervention of the Pythian priestess, who gives to Ion before his departure for Athens the box containing the baby-clothes and trinkets with which he was found. Creusa recognizes the box and claims him as her son. At first angry and incredulous Ion is finally convinced when Creusa names and describes correctly the contents of the box. Ion is reconciled to his mother but still cannot believe that Apollo is her ravisher or understand why he lied to Xuthus. He is about to enquire further of Phœbus' oracle when Pallas Athene appears from above. We expect Apollo himself but Athene explains that he could not face the public reproaches! She defends him as best she may; his lie to Xuthus was but a stratagem to give Ion a noble heritage; the truth is therefore still to be kept hidden from Xuthus. "The workings of the gods are ever slow, but effectual in the end." The chorus re-echo these pious sentiments and the play ends happily. This perfunctory saving of Apollo's face cannot obliterate the impression of the rest of the play; it is but a concession to orthodox sentiment. Creusa's acceptance of it is half-hearted and Ion shows no joy that the god in whose service he had lovingly worked is his father. He is shocked by the revelation and tries not to believe it. One would like to see more of Ion once so happy singing at his menial tasks.

Later War Plays: "Trojan Women" (415) and "Phoenissae"

The Peace of Nicias in 421 was followed by six years of uncertainty. When in 415 the Athenians sent the expedition to Sicily, there was little doubt that a resumption of direct hostilities with Sparta was at hand. It is not surprising therefore that about this time we find Euripides returning to war-plays. But there is a great difference between the earlier war-plays and those after 415. In foreign policy as in religion Euripides found himself more than ever at variance with popular feeling. At the beginning of the war he had honestly believed that Athens was the educator of Hellas and that the war was one of light against darkness. He had striven to present Athens as the embodiment of justice in international dealings; but ten years of inconclusive warfare together with Athens' harsh treatment of her allies, particularly her conduct towards Melos in 416, had shown him that such a claim was false. Athens had even less right than Sparta to be considered just and honest. Euripides did not on that account become pro-enemy; he saw, as Thucydides did, that war-mindedness leaves no room for justice and humanity on either side. Hence the Sicilian expedition was for him a national disaster from the very moment that it sailed. It meant that war-mindedness was rampant at Athens and that it would go on increasing; it meant the death of the Athens which he had loved and which he had put before his fellow-citizens as an ideal worth fighting for. The ideal had already perished in the fight. Euripides was thus placed in the dilemma which confronts every loyal and patriotic citizen. Still, one thing was certain — the horrors of war and the sufferings of women and children, and that is the subject of the *Trojan Women.* The play is the third of a trilogy centring in the Æschylean fashion round one theme, here the Trojan War. The first two plays *Alexander* and *Palamedes*, together with the satyr-play *Sisyphus*, are lost, but we know that in the *Alexander* the rejoicings over the finding of Priam's son Paris are interrupted by the unheeded warnings of Cassandra. It is a play of the eve of war. The *Palamedes* shows us the invading Greeks and the war mentality which leads them to put to death as a traitor the innocent Palamedes because he had hoped that his discovery of writing might be used as a means towards peace. Quite possibly it was the best play of the three, for the *Troades*, the play of the aftermath of war, in spite of its tremendous force is too static and too tendentious. One by one the Trojan captives and Helen too hear their fate until the play ends with the destruction of their city. Yet out of such material Euripides succeeded in making one of the most moving of his plays and one which acts unexpectedly well.

In the *Phœnissæ* (?410) though its anti-war character is less strongly marked we have in Eteocles a type of war-mentality that is not uncommon. He is so obsessed by love of power, by his own military prowess and by the efficiency of the troops under his command that the needs of the country which he rules are brushed aside as unimportant. He is the embodiment of the war-at-any-price party at Athens who threw away chances of making peace. "It is base cowardice to surrender possessions won" (see 503–525). Over against him stands Polyneices who in exile has learned to love his country as Eteocles cannot. The slaying of the two brothers by each other is no more unnatural than the internal strife at Athens in 411 when the restored democracy after the fall of the Four Hundred would not allow their opponents to live at Athens.

"Electra" (413) and "Orestes" (408)

The tragic story of the House of Pelops attracted Euripides no less than Æschylus and Sophocles. In the *Electra* we have the murder of Clytæmnestra and in the *Orestes* the madness of the murderer, who appears also in the *Iphigeneia in Tauris*. Euripides has given an original turn to the story of the murder. Ægisthus has forced Electra to marry a lowly peasant, to whom is given the name Auturgus. He is an example of the truth that Euripides holds, that nobility of nature does not depend on noble birth (366–372, 550–551). Orestes is not recognized by Electra — the legendary signs of recognition, similar footprints, hair, clothing, are ridiculed in passing — but by an old teacher who knew Orestes. Clytæmnestra is inaccessible in the palace, seeing no one, and it is arranged that she shall be lured to come to the peasant's cottage by sending word that Electra has become a mother. The queen does not know that out of respect for Electra's rank Auturgus has been her husband only in name. The slaying of Ægisthus is accomplished first. Orestes returns and, encouraged by Electra, slays his mother within the cottage. The Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux) who speak the epilogue declare that Clytæmnestra is deserving of her fate but not that Orestes has acted rightly; the blame however is Apollo's who had ordered the deed (1244–46). Orestes is therefore destined to be acquitted by the court of the Areopagus but he cannot escape the madness. The action of the *Orestes* is supposed to take place six days after the murder of Clytæmnestra. Orestes and Pylades are condemned to death simply as murderers whom the state must punish. In revenge on Menelaus, who had stepped in to represent law and order, they kill Helen, seizing Hermione her daughter for a hostage. They are about to slay Hermione before her father's eyes when Apollo appears; Helen is to be deified, Orestes to stand his trial at Athens and wed Hermione.

Æschylus endowed this story with a theological import and saw in it a conflict of religions. Euripides as usual shows little regard for Apollo who incites men to murder. The glamour of magnificence which Æschylus spread over the human characters, slayers and slain, is also stripped off.[43] Electra is unpleasant and vindictive, Orestes a very ordinary man. Everything is made base and sordid as befits a story of murder for vengeance. The false report which lured Clytæmnestra was a base trick. It was successful because Clytæmnestra was not a superhuman monster but a mother. She is ready to forgive Electra her resentment and no longer recalls with pride the slaying of Agamemnon (*El.*, 1105–1106). To Euripides the ethics of bloodguiltiness are no ethics at all. The god Apollo ordered the murder of Clytæmnestra but Agamemnon himself, for whose sake she was murdered, would never have counselled such an act (*Orestes*, 285–293). Human beings are often nobler than the gods they worship.

Romance: "Iphigeneia" (413) and "Helen" (412)

What is surprising about the plays after 414 is their variety. At 70 Euripides was still finding new methods and writing tragedies which would not have been recognized as such when he was a young man. Turning away from the gloomy House of Pelops and the miseries of the war, he seems to find relief in more romantic subjects such as the *Iphigeneia among the Tauri*. According to one story Iphigeneia had not met her death when Agamemnon sacrificed her at Aulis to Artemis but had been carried away by the goddess to the distant Tauric land. Here with a chorus of Greek women we find her a priestess of Artemis, presiding over barbaric rites. Orestes, sane at intervals, and Pylades come to this land and according to the cruel local custom are to be sacrificed to Artemis. How brother and sister become known to each other, how all three plot to escape and are baffled at the last moment only to be saved by Artemis herself, make excellent reading and acting, full of excitement and delicious "irony." Once more, as in the *Ion*, we see how Euripides pointed the way for the comedy of the future. The *Helena* is laid in Egypt whither the real Helen was taken by Zeus. It was but a copy that Paris stole. The rehabilitation of Helen's character is as old as Stesichorus [44] and Euripides had already alluded to it in the epilogue to the *Electra*. In this play Helen is hotly wooed by the local prince but remains faithful to Menelaus. As luck would have it he is shipwrecked on that coast as he was returning from Troy with the phantom-Helen. The disappearance of the phantom, mystifications and explanations, plans to escape from the now hostile court make a romantic and even amusing play; but it is not, like the *Alcestis*, a substitute for a satyr-play. The gods and the divine legends are treated light-heartedly, made and unmade as man fancies,[45] but human affairs are handled seriously. Euripides is secularizing tragedy but he is not burlesquing it.

---

[43] Nor is there any of Sophocles' tenderness with Electra but his play may be later than Euripides'.

"Bacchae"

Even when Euripides left Athens in 408 his vitality and ingenuity were as great as ever. Indeed his new surroundings gave new impulses to his intellect. For it was in Macedon that he wrote one of his greatest and most discussed plays, the *Bacchæ*, produced shortly after his death in 406. Some have called it a palinode, a rehabilitation of the gods he had abused, some have seen in it a tract in favour of the suppression of wine. Though it is not either of these and is not to be summed up in a phrase at all, it is in some ways a baffling play. If we look back, not at the *Ion* but at the *Hippolytus*, written some thirty years before, it may help us to understand the *Bacchæ* better. We saw there that Euripides was no atheist; the existence of Aphrodite and her power to wreck human lives are unquestionable; it is dangerous for any man to neglect or scorn her. So it is with Dionysus. You cannot afford to neglect the joys of life, excitement, emotion, the beauty of wildness — for it is not merely wine-drinking that Dionysus stands for. Man cannot live by reason and intellect only; it is against nature and to try to do so is a kind of ὕβρις. That is the first crime of Pentheus, a presumptuous belief in his own wisdom. His indignation at the Bacchic excesses may be justifiable but it does not count. It is not a question of morality and Dionysus is not concerned with it. What view Euripides himself took of the moral questions it is impossible to say for the *Bacchæ*, like many other Euripidean plays, demonstrates the author's ability to see both sides of every question and to present them with fairness.

---

[44] Who, however, did not make Helen visit Egypt. His methods and motives were different. See above, p. 126.

[45] For example, it seems to be almost a matter of indifference whether Helen's brothers killed themselves or became gods.

The god himself is the chief character in the play. He has come to Thebes, his mother's city, to establish his worship and his rites there. He pretends to be but a man, a prophet of Dionysus. The people of Semele's city, led by their king Pentheus, have denied the godhead of her son and make no libation to him. Like Aphrodite in the *Hippolytus* Dionysus vows that he will teach them a lesson and prove his divinity. What the worship of Bacchus stands for is skilfully revealed to us in the songs of the chorus of women-worshippers, poems breathing the spirit of care-free mountain life, and strange intoxicating food both for body and mind. The aged Cadmus and Teiresias join the band. They know they are making themselves ridiculous trying to dance and caper but *they do not care* (200–204). Pentheus is shocked at their behaviour and that of many respectable Theban women, among them his mother Agave, who have been driven mad by the slighted god and have left their homes and husbands for the mountains. His puritanical mind jumps to the conclusion that sex is at the bottom of it all (225). The prophet-god is apprehended and brought before Pentheus, who has him imprisoned. By his supernatural power the god smashes his prison. A messenger brings word of the cattle-slaying orgies of Agave and the other Bacchus-filled women on the mountain. The prurient curiosity of the respectable Pentheus is aroused. Dionysus encourages him, almost hypnotizes him until, clad as a Bacchant, he is ready to follow the god to Mt. Cithæron. How he is captured in his spying-place and torn limb from limb by his mother and the others is told by a messenger in horrible detail. Agave returns, still glorying in the slaying of what she took to be a young lion, and calling on Cadmus and summoning Pentheus to admire her strength. Gradually her sanity returns and Cadmus shows her what she has done. Too late she allows that Dionysus is indeed a god. Yet her last words are not of submission; she longs to be where nothing can remind her of the dreadful god. So Dionysus has proved his divinity, but at what a cost in human lives and suffering! Yet the powers that be cannot be neglected with impunity and Pentheus was guilty both of prying curiosity into things he has no right to know (912) and of setting himself up as better than other men:

He with thought unrighteous and unholy pride,
'Gainst Bacchus and his mother, their orgies' mystic mirth
    Still holds his frantic strife,
And sets him up against the god, deeming it light
    To vanquish the invincible of might.[46]
(997–1003.)

"Iphigeneia at Aulis"

Euripides left unfinished at his death the beautiful *Iphigeneia at Aulis*. Here, as in other plays about the family of Pelops, Euripides unmasks the great and reduces them to human levels. Agamemnon is no kin of men but a weak and vacillating leader who in the end agrees to the sacrifice of his daughter only because he is afraid of his own impatient army. Achilles appears in a more favourable light; his name has been used to lure Iphigeneia and her mother to come as for a wedding. He is indignant at the deception and ready to fight to save the girl. But Iphigeneia has the same capacity for self-sacrifice as Macaria (*Heracleidæ*) and Polyxena (*Hecuba*) and offers to die. Aristotle [47] finds fault with the psychology here; but Euripides understood far better than Aristotle the feelings of a girl who suddenly finds no bridegroom on her wedding day and whose one thought is to escape from an ignominious situation.

---

[46] Tr. H. H. Milman.

We know the outline of some of the lost plays of Euripides, some of which deal like the *Ion* with mortal women ravished by gods. Fragments of the *Antiope*, augmented by the discovery of a papyrus,[48] are strongly reminiscent of the *Ion*. It is particularly interesting because into the mouth of one of the characters, the legendary poet Amphion, Euripides puts a defence of the poet's calling and of his own conduct in abstaining from politics that he might better serve his country by his art. We have extant the play *Rhesus* which is doubtfully ascribed to Euripides.[49] The works of other fifth-century tragedians Ion of Chios, Achæus of Eretria and Agathon, much admired by Plato, are lost. The *Pirithous* of Euripides, of which a few fragments remain, was sometimes ascribed to Critias, one of the Thirty Tyrants and a prominent littérateur.

---

[47] *Poet.*, xv. 5.

[48] J. U. Powell, *New Chapters*, 3rd series, pp. 105–112.

[49] If it is by Euripides, it would seem, on metrical grounds but not on others, to be an early work. But the general style and tone, though not the vocabulary, suggest that Euripides is not the author. Yet our external evidence does not show that it was by anyone else. Hence it may have been produced in his name and been written by another (W. H. Porter). Both date and authenticity have been the subject of much controversy. For an excellent summary consult W. H. Porter's edition (2nd ed., 1929). Since then other scholars, D. P. Dimitrov (*Bull. Soc. hist. à Sofia*, vol. x., 1930) and R. Goossens (*Bull. Assoc. Guillaume Budé*, Nr. 41, Oct. 1933) have tried to connect the play with Sitalces of Thrace, but they differ entirely in their conclusions, the former agreeing with Wilamowitz that it is a fourth-century play, the latter affirming that it is a genuine Euripidean tragedy of about 424.

Origins of Comedy

The origins of Comedy are almost as obscure as those of tragedy, with which it was closely connected, but it seems certain that they are partly Dorian and partly native Attic. As early as the sixth century B.C. scenes both of mythological burlesque and of everyday life were performed at Megara on the Isthmus and in the early fifth century at Megara Hyblaea and Syracuse in Sicily. The composition of these farcical sketches was associated particularly with the name of Epicharmus, who accordingly passed as the originator of comedy[50]; but actually the work of Epicharmus, from what we know about it, was not *κωμῳδία*.[51] The words *κωμῳδός*, *κωμῳδία* are connected with *κῶμος* "revel" and *κωμάζειν*. Now there were many ways in Attica and elsewhere of *κωμάζειν* "celebrating"; a *κῶμος* might be a serenade *en masse*, a demonstration outside someone's house or in honour of a god, especially Dionysus; it might be a phallic procession,[52] its members might dress as animals for some half-forgotten religious reason or for the mere pleasure of dressing up. They were, as Aristotle says, volunteers, who took part because they enjoyed it; but someone, we know not who, began to organize bands of revellers and train them for the Dionysiac festivals. Herein lies the Attic contribution to comedy — a trained chorus of *κωμῳδοί*. How or when this choral element was combined with the more dramatic and more narrative elements of Dorian origin we do not know,[53] but traces of both are visible in the fully-fledged comedy of Aristophanes. The *parabasis*, that part of a play in which the chorus directly addresses the audience, is a relic of the κῶμος, while the farcical interludes and probably the *agon* or contest may be regarded as Dorian elements.

---

[50] *e.g.* Plato, *Theaet.*, 152 E.

[51] They were however drama of some kind and in this way Epicharmus contributed to the origin and development of Attic Comedy. He burlesqued current philosophical ideas (Fr. 170) and made comic versions of myths — both features of the comedy of Aristophanes. See A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb*, etc., p. 371 ff.

[52] Aristotle (*Poet.*, iv. 12) says that comedy arose from the singers in phallic processions; this is substantially true of the choral element, since phallic processions were a prominent feature of the Rural Dionysia, but it is clear that ideas were also incorporated of other *κῶμοι* not necessarily phallic. Revels cannot be rigidly classified.

[53] The Megarian comic poet Susarion is said to have brought Megarian "comedy" to Athens about 580, but the evidence is flimsy for any contribution before Epicharmus.

The history of the development of the Old Comedy is more than obscure. Even Aristotle has to say "Who first added masks, prologues, number of actors and so forth is not known" (*Poet.*, v. 3). On the purely literary side however we can readily see that just as tragedy owed much to Epic and Lyric (Part II, n. 69), so parts of comedy have affinities with Iambic and Satiric verse. It was some time before Comedy received official recognition within the city of Athens — not until it had become well established in the country districts, but by the time of the Persian wars plays were being regularly performed. The prejudice however died hard, or rather it never died, but found fresh cause and lived. For there must have been a powerful section of Athenian citizens who disapproved of comedy, not because of its obscenities but because it pilloried and ridiculed living men. In 440 they succeeded in prohibiting this freedom. The ban was removed three years later but was reimposed in 416.[54]

The earliest comic poets at Athens were Chionides and Magnes who were writing in the years that followed the battle of Salamis (480). Magnes, we know from Aristophanes, lived too long; his early brilliance did not last in his old age. More important is Cratinus, who flourished between 453 and 423. It was he who introduced political satire into comedy. A follower of Cimon and, like most comic writers, a *laudator temporis acti*, he is against the Sophists in music and morals and against foreigners in everything. His attacks were marked by a fund of inventiveness and a torrential flow of language,[55] and he was the main reason for the ban of 440. Cratinus' best-known play, however, is not a direct political attack.

---

[54] Schol. Arist., *Birds*, 1297, but the interpretation is uncertain and in any case the ban did not exclude all political references.

[55] Aristophanes, *Knights*, 526 ff.

The *Dionysalexandrus*[56] is a play of mythological burlesque, which may still have had a political application. The story of the judgment of Paris (Alexander) is retold with variations and with the god Dionysus as the central figure. Hera offers him Power, Athene success in war and Aphrodite irresistible charm for women. He chooses Aphrodite and is thus able to win Helen and induce her to leave Sparta with him. In the end, however, she passes into the hands of Paris as in the original legend. This Argument shows elaboration of plot but does not suggest that there could have been much scope for the bitter invective for which Cratinus was famous and which marked him as the literary heir of Archilochus. It is therefore likely that it belongs to a late period of Cratinus' career, when he came under the influence of the school of Crates who made more use of plot and of imaginary persons.

Very different are Crates and Pherecrates. Of the former Aristophanes[57] speaks highly for his refinement and neat wit. He was not a political satirist but a forerunner of the urbane comedy of manners of the next century. Pherecrates was of the same non-political school. In one fragment of 25 lines (Fr. 145 Kock) Pherecrates deplores the decay of flute music, blaming among others Timotheus of Miletus.[58] There was a host of writers contemporary with Aristophanes of whom the chief are Eupolis, Phrynichus[59] and Plato (Comicus). Eupolis, who with Cratinus and Aristophanes makes the trio of great masters of Attic comedy, was killed in the war at the age of 35. At first a friend of Aristophanes, whom he assisted in the composition of the *Knights* in 424, he afterwards quarrelled with him. The fragments of Eupolis are just long enough and numerous enough to make us wish that some of his plays had survived entire, that we might set him alongside Aristophanes. He attacks the

---

[56] Our knowledge depends chiefly on the "Argument" of the play, part of which was found on a papyrus in 1904, *Ox. Pap.*, iv. 663.

[57] *Knights*, 537–540.

[58] On whom see above, p. 147.

[59] Not the tragedian, who was an older contemporary of Æschylus.

Sophists, of course, calling Socrates "an idle penniless chatterer who had wit for everything but to earn an honest living" (Fr. 352 Kock). In his *Demes* (*c.* 417) he praised the eloquence of Pericles[60] and deplored the lack of the good generals of the olden times (Fr. 117).[61]

In comedy even more than in tragedy we must not be led astray by our use of the same word in modern times. The Old or Fifth-century Comedy differs entirely from its modern counterpart, which, as we have seen, has more affinities with Euripides. The Old Comedy honoured Dionysus in very fact; the characters are in a sense drunk, not reeling or stupefied but stimulated and inspired to do and say quite unreasonable and unaccountable things. At one moment they will delight in obscene jokes and knockabout fun, in the next they will utter high moral sentiments and even rise to pure poetry. Only Dionysus can make that possible. It becomes easy and natural to make a city midway between the heavens and earth, to converse with dead poets or living clouds. It is not that we are transported into a different world as in the fairy-tale plays of Euripides. We are in our own world but we see it through impish spectacles which sometimes distort, sometimes magnify, are sometimes highly coloured but occasionally plain. Little wonder that Old Comedy is difficult to appreciate. We cannot always tell what the players are actually doing. Without notes and references many of the jokes are meaningless. Aristophanes is always parodying tragedy; often we do not possess the original and except in a general way the force of the parody is lost. When prominent persons like Socrates or Cleon appear, we can enjoy the ridicule, but names which were well known to the audience have to be sought out by us in works of reference, perhaps only to find that nothing is known of the man beyond what is said in the passage we are reading. Yet no one who reads Aristophanes can fail to be attracted, whether by the interesting sidelights on Athenian history and Athenian character, or by the witty and acute criticism of contemporary thought, morality and literature, or by the sheer exuberant fun and the salutary occupation of being reminded that our bodily functions play a more important part in our lives than our respectability will allow us to admit.

---

[60] Fr. 94.

[61] Besides the *Demes*, of which a papyrus fragment of about 100 lines was discovered in 1911 (Norwood, *Greek Comedy*, p. 179 ff.), Eupolis' comedies included the *Goats*, *Flatterers*, *Cities*, *Autolycus* and *Maricas*, in which he attacked Hyperbolus.

The language of Comedy is, as one would expect, more homely and more flexible than that of tragedy; it is full of puns and of comic words coined for the occasion. When it is solemn and pompous, as it frequently is, it is generally a piece of parody. There is greater variety of rhythm and metre and the comparatively regular structure of tragedy, epeisodia alternating with stasima, is not found in comedy. This is due partly to its complex origin; the parts of comedy are less clearly defined and it is impossible to fit them all into a single regular framework. The especial features of the Old Comedy are the *Agon* or Contest, sometimes between two actors, sometimes between two halves of the chorus or between actor and chorus; for the chorus, far from being a moderating influence as in tragedy, generally stirs up trouble and adds to the fun: and the *Parabasis* where the chorus address the audience, often in the name of the author. The parabasis itself may be divided into different parts but only a few plays have a parabasis that is complete in every detail. In Aristophanes' early period (before 420) the parabasis is generally fairly complete; the plays of second period (*Frogs*, *Lysistrata*) have a less perfect parabasis, while those of the third period have none at all. The concluding scene of comedy is often some kind of feast. The traditional elements in the structure of Old Comedy were thus decreasing in importance. In other matters Aristophanes himself claims to have improved comedy, to have made it more refined and intellectual,[62] less dependent for success on mere vulgarity and horse-play or prurient suggestion:

---

[62] *Clouds'* Parabasis, 578 ff.

No, he kept his purpose pure and high,
That never the Muse, whom he loved to use, the villainous trade of the bawd should ply.[63]

Aristophanes: Early Period

Aristophanes, the only writer of Old Comedy whose plays have not all perished, was born about 446 and died about 386. Of his life we know very little. At the age of about 15, when the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War led to the concentration of the inhabitants of Attica within the walls of Athens, he was taken to Ægina where his family had been fortunate enough to obtain a grant of land. This was no great distance away but it is likely that he returned to the city before long. He began his career as a playwright early and for some forty years he was the dominant power in the Athenian comic stage. Of his first two plays the Δαιταλῆς [64] (427) and the *Babylonians* (426) only fragments remain. The former, in parts at any rate, ridiculed the linguistic pretensions of certain Sophists [65]; we know a little about the latter play from notes of the scholiasts on *Acharnians* 377 ff. where it is alluded to. Taking for illustration the suppression by Darius of a Babylonian revolt Aristophanes depicts the allies of Athens as bound in cruel subjection to her harsh dominion, suffering particularly from Cleon who less than a year before had come into prominence with his proposal to sack Mytilene. The play aroused much ill-feeling, more particularly as the city was full of visitors from allied cities, and the author was prosecuted by Cleon. Yet in spite of this he produced the *Acharnians* in the next year, winning first prize against Cratinus and Eupolis — a striking testimony to the fairness of the judges and their freedom from political bias. The *Acharnians* is good comedy and comparatively easy to read. The idea of one Athenian making peace with the Lacedæmonians for himself and his family is full of possibilities for amusing situations. Yet it is not all fooling; Aristophanes prided

[63] *Wasps*, 1027–1029, tr. B. B. Rogers. Cp. *Peace*, 736 ff.

[64] The "Feastingborough Folk."

[65] Fr. 222 Kock. Cp. *Clouds*, *passim*.

himself on the educative value of his plays. The celebration in the play of the Rural Dionysia which had been suspended since the war began, was intended to bring home to the people how much they were losing. He even dares to speak up for the Spartans:

Dicæopolis. Yet I know that these our foemen,
who our bitter wrath excite,
Were not always wrong entirely,
nor ourselves entirely right.
Chorus. Not entirely, shameless rascal?
Do you such opinions dare
Openly to flaunt before me?
Shall I then a traitor spare?
Dicæopolis. Not entirely, not entirely!
I can prove by reasons strong
That in many points the Spartans
at our hands have suffered wrong.[66]

In the parabasis (626–658) the chorus, laying aside their character as stout patriots from Acharnæ, address the audience on behalf of their master the poet; he is not a traitor but one who always has endeavoured and will endeavour to save his people from the wiles of demagogues. All this is serious enough, though intermingled with comic inventions and exaggerations; but the second half of the play is more frankly funny. Dicæopolis now has a private market-place in which he and only he may trade with enemy-states. First comes a starving Megarian trying to sell his little daughters disguised as pigs. He speaks his native Doric:

Dicæopolis. But she's no good for offerings
Megarian. What for no?
What for nae guid for offerins?
Dicæopolis. She's no tail.
Megarian. Aweel, the puir wee thing, she's owre young yet
But when she's auld, she'll have a gawcie tail.[67]

---

[66] *Acharn.*, 309–314, tr. Rogers.
[67] 784–787, tr. Rogers.

The transaction is completed in spite of the interference of an informer. Next comes a Bœotian, selling fowl and game and speaking in his dialect. After a choral song describing the joys of peace an Attic farmer appears and begs for a share in this Peace in vain. Dicæopolis wishes to keep it for himself but in return for a share in a wedding feast he gives the bride a drop of his "Peace Mixture" to be rubbed nightly on her husband to keep him at home. So Dicæopolis is to enjoy feasting and plenty while Lamachus goes to war and is wounded. The old farmer is unconcerned and sits with a girl on each knee kissing them alternately. It is almost as if Aristophanes had deliberately obscured the seriousness of his play by a ridiculous ending.

"Knights" (424)

Cleon's unexpected success in capturing the Spartan contingent in Sphacteria in 425 [68] made him supreme at Athens but Aristophanes far from being daunted seized the opportunity for another attack. The play is named from the chorus of Knights representing the wealthier and more conservative citizens who are opposed to the demagogues. The chief character is Demos, an old man who typifies the whole Athenian people; he is fond of comfort, good-hearted and easily led. He has two loyal servants, the generals Nicias and Demosthenes, but he and they are under the thumb of Paphlagon (Cleon), a sly fawning knave who always manages to win the credit for others' good deeds, as recently at Pylos:

Servant II (Demosthenes). Then he'll seize
A dish some other servant has prepared
And serve it up for master; and quite lately
I'd baked a rich Laconian cake at Pylus,
When in runs Paphlagon, and bags my cake,
And serves it up to Demus as his own.[69]

The satire in this play is delicious; instead of a mere denunciation of Cleon the leather-seller, Aristophanes has devised a subtle attack which shows a great advance in method over the *Acharnians*. A new servant of the People, a tripe or sausage-seller, is discovered; he is still more vulgar and deceitful, less educated and of baser morals than Paphlagon. Thus he has all the qualifications for a statesman, as an old gentleman had told him approvingly when as a little boy he stole pieces of meat and was not found out (426). In the first Agon with the help of the Knights he defeats Paphlagon and drives him off. Next follows the parabasis from which we learn that this is the first play that Aristophanes produced under his own name, although of course he was known to be the author of the *Acharnians* and other plays. This parabasis is particularly interesting for the information which it gives us about Aristophanes' predecessors. The two politicians now return. Paphlagon has been worsted in a debate in the Council; he now appeals to the People and a second Agon takes place before Demos. The sausage-dealer outbids his rival with fair promises and caps his remarks with outrageous abuse until Cleon admits that he has met his master at his own game (1206). Demos gives his verdict for Agoracritus the sausage-dealer and bids him change places with Cleon. In addition to a second Agon the *Knights* has a second parabasis (1274–1315), part of which (1288–1315) is the work of Eupolis.[70] It is a kind of explanation, warning us, surely unnecessarily, that it is not seriously suggested that the demagogues should be replaced by worse rogues. The sausage-seller therefore changes his skin and pronounces in favour of purity in private and public life. It is a strange and ineffective ending to a piece of brilliant satire.

---

[68] See above, p. 197.
[69] *Knights*, 52–57, tr. Rogers.

"Clouds"

Next year (423) there was no need to plead the cause of peace. Although the Peace of Nicias was not concluded till 421, a year's armistice was made early in 423. Cleon, it is true, is attacked incidentally in the parabasis of the *Clouds*, but this has no direct bearing on the war and, as we learn from the *Wasps* (1284–1291), it was but a gesture of defiance. Cleon had threatened Aristophanes with prosecution on some charge but had withdrawn when the poet made some kind of apology. Feeling that he has ignominiously climbed down, Aristophanes here deals a few more thrusts at the demagogue. On the whole however the *Clouds* is concerned not with politics but with education. When first produced in 423 it was a failure, being placed last, defeated by the *Bottle* of Cratinus and the *Connus* (a music-teacher) of Ameipsias. Aristophanes, greatly incensed, revised the play, which was published after 421.[71] The additions include a new parabasis from which we learn these facts, and the play we have is the revised edition.

---

[70] Scholia on *Knights*, 1291 and *Clouds*, 554.

It opens with a bedroom scene. Strepsiades is in bed with his son Pheidippides. They cannot sleep and quarrel about the bedclothes and everything else. The old father has married an aristocratic wife and their son Pheidippides with his love of racing has landed his father heavily in debt. Strepsiades has a plan to cheat his creditors; he will send his son to the Thinking Shop (*φροντιστήριον*), a school where they teach you how to win any case or argument by cleverness of speech; if Pheidippides takes a course of this learning, he will be able to confound the creditors. The young man refuses to go and Strepsiades resolves to go himself. Now the Sophists who taught rhetoric at Athens [72] undoubtedly earned high fees and turned out clever speakers who were able to sway the minds of juries and of the people, and we are prepared for a skit on these men and their methods; but we are surprised to find Socrates at the head of this Thinking Shop,[73] for he was not a teacher of rhetoric nor did he keep a school. Aristophanes must have been well aware of this. Yet the reason why Socrates is thus singled out is obvious. He was by far the most prominent of the Sophists. The very fact that he did not teach in a lecture-room but argued in the market-place with all and sundry made him the best known to everyone. Indeed it is difficult to see what other choice Aristophanes could have made. This subtle kind of satire was difficult enough to bring home to an average audience, as the initial failure of the *Clouds* shows. Without Socrates, who was the city's pet oddity, it would have been wellnigh impossible. By the same token it would have been difficult to make a wide appeal if the satire had been strictly confined within the limits of truth and everything directly attributable to Socrates. The result is that we are presented with a composite but quite recognizable picture. All the sciences and sophistries are served up to us, experiments to find how many of its own feet a flea can jump or to demonstrate the disgusting habits of gnats and lizards, astronomy, geometry and geography — the old man is completely baffled by a map. There are the jargon of the physicists, calendar-reform, atheism, materialism, the chorus of lady clouds are the only divinities and Strepsiades is terrified by them but at least he can now understand thunder. The professors of grammar are neatly satirized when Socrates shows Strepsiades that he cannot talk his own language (598 ff.). In all this hotch-potch of Anaxagoras, Protagoras, Prodicus and others there may be little of the real Socrates, but it must have accorded with what the public believed about Socrates or the burlesque would be pointless. And the picture is not entirely false. Socrates' personal appearance and his excessively frugal habits are there as well as his fondness of arguing, his homely illustrations. His apparently inconsequential remark, "Exactly the same thing happens in the case of watercress" (234), is scarcely an exaggeration, for we know from reading Plato how Socrates loved to surprise and puzzle his interlocutors with seemingly far-fetched analogies. After the parabasis Strepsiades is turned out of the school as quite unteachable; he succeeds in making his son come in his stead and urges Socrates to omit all other knowledge and to proceed at once to teach the use of the Unjust Reasoning to defeat the Just. The two "Reasons" now appear as persons[74] and in the *Agon* which follows the good old-fashioned morality of the *δίκαιος λόγος* is easily worsted by the sophistical education of the *ἄδικος λόγος*. Meanwhile Pheidippides has been learning his lessons and Socrates restores him to his father well enough trained to get the better of anyone. Two of the chief creditors are sent packing by a mixture of outrageous argument and abuse, when suddenly Pheidippides starts beating his father unmercifully. They had quarrelled, it seems, first about having singing at meal times, which Pheidippides protested was old fashioned, next about songs. Strepsiades wanted something of Simonides or Æschylus. He had reluctantly consented to allow a more modern song of Euripides, but Pheidippides had chosen such an unseemly one that his father lost his temper. The young man has learned sophistry so well that he turns the tables on his father with his Unjust Reasoning. Strepsiades vents his rage on Socrates and the Clouds by setting fire to the Thinking Shop. For sheer intellectual brilliance the *Clouds* is unrivalled and the author was right when he called it his cleverest comedy.[75]

---

[71] This is the date of the *Maricas* of Eupolis to which reference is made in l. 553.

[72] See above, p. 180 ff.

[73] The Pythagorean schools may have been something like *φροντιστήρια* and the idea of philosophical burlesque goes back to Epicharmus (Fr. 170–173 Kaibel), who according to Diog. L., was once a pupil of Pythagoras. See above, note 51.

"Wasps" (422)

The Athenians were notoriously fond of their law courts and under the Heliastic system they had plenty of opportunity for sitting as judges. Here was good material for the satirist. The wasps in the play are the chorus of Athenian dicasts and the two chief characters are "Love-Cleon" the father and "Hate-Cleon" his son. Philocleon is a maniac about law courts, neglecting food and comfort and caring for nothing but sitting in judgment. He fondly believes that his work is of supreme national importance. He is a ludicrous and pitiful figure but there is no hatred in the ridicule. He is just the good old Athenian Demos who has been fooled and tricked by demagogues into believing that he rules the world; so he is Cleon's friend. The son, Cleon's enemy, tries to show him that he is no ruler but a mere slave tied to his judgment-seat, while his masters make fortunes and only pay the dicasts a miserly three obols a day. When in the Agon the old man is beaten and disconsolate, Bdelycleon the son arranges a private law court of his own in which some amusing scenes are played. Bdelycleon is constantly busy keeping an eye on his father who when he has a chance always misbehaves himself. The *Wasps* makes less appeal to modern readers than the earlier plays of this period. Its effects depend so much on knowledge of all the paraphernalia of Attic law and it is packed with allusions to contemporary persons in whom we have no interest. The play is therefore valuable for the historian but it is so much directed to entertain an audience of Athenians that it is hard for us to feel its charm.

---

[74] The same kind of personification of λόγος must have taken place in the *Λόγος καὶ Λογίνα* of Epicharmus.

[75] *Clouds*, 522.

"Peace" (421)

In the spring of 421 Cleon was dead and when the *Peace* was produced the Peace of Nicias was soon to be signed. Neither Cleon nor the living war-mongers provided any further material and there is less Aristophanic zest about this play. The central idea is an expedition to Olympus to rescue Peace from the clutches of War, who has imprisoned her in a deep pit since Zeus delivered all Hellas into his hands. The merit of the piece lies less in its comicality than in its verse, a fact which foreshadows the change that was to come over Aristophanes' Comedy in its middle period. Some of the lyrics, *e.g.* 974–1011, are excellent examples of light but not ludicrous verse and the whole is full of the joys of a peaceful Attic countryside soon to be restored.

Middle Period: "Birds" (414)

In the next six years Aristophanes seems to have produced no plays. In 414 he produced two, the lost *Amphiaraus* at the Lenæa and the *Birds* at the Dionysia. In reading the *Birds* we are conscious that some change has taken place both in the man and in his art. The increasing liking for sheer song was already observed in the *Peace*, but there was a change imposed from without upon comedy in general. In 416 comic writers were again forbidden to present living politicians for ridicule. The short-lived freedom of the Athenian comic stage was gone for ever and Aristophanes was forced to find new methods. Perhaps he would have done so in any case for we may legitimately infer from the *Birds* that Aristophanes was himself disgusted with life and politics at Athens. If the Ten Years' War had been miserable and unnecessary, the Peace was a disappointment and a disillusionment. To go further than this, to see Alcibiades in Peithetærus or to suppose that the founding of the Bird-city is a satire on the Athenian dreams of a Sicilian empire is illegitimate. It is true that the great expedition had just set sail the previous year, but Aristophanes does not attack the enterprise as such or warn his countrymen of its dangers. Indeed if we were to try and seek a serious lesson in the *Birds* at all, it would be that there were very good reasons for going to live elsewhere than at Athens.

Two Athenians, Peithetærus (Catch-Pal) and Euelpides (Full of Hope), having bought two crows in the market-place to show them the way, are in search of the land of birds, where rules Tereus of mythology, who was changed into a hoopoe and became king of the birds. On their arrival the hoopoe asks what they seek and Euelpides replies:

> You were a man at first, as we are now,
> And had your creditors, as we have now,
> And loved to shirk your debts, as we do now;
> And then you changed your nature and became
> A bird, and flew round land and sea, and know
> All that men feel and all that birds feel too.
> That's why we are come as suppliants here, to ask
> If you can tell us of some city, soft
> As a thick rug, to lay us down within.
> (114–122, tr. Rogers.)

The hoopoe makes various suggestions of places on earth but the two find some humorous objection to them all and finally suggest that the birds join them in founding a new city midway between Heaven and Earth. In this way they will be able to intercept communications between gods and men and in particular the burnt-offerings on which the gods depended for sustenance. The hoopoe is delighted with the idea and summons his wife the nightingale in a delightful little song (209–222). With flute music to represent the nightingale, he sings again to summon all the birds. One by one they come and the hoopoe explains their names and natures until the entire chorus of the birds is present. This whole scene with its combination of light music with a novel and amusing spectacle is something new in Attic comedy, too new perhaps for the judges who placed the *Birds* in the second rank; but the novelty of it has never worn off. The chorus of birds are not very friendly at the sight of their natural enemy, man, and are with difficulty checked by their king while Peithetærus expounds his plan and proves that the Birds are more ancient than gods or men, the eagle is older than Zeus, the owl than Athene, and birds are the only true gods. The chorus are still a little incredulous:

Chorus. But men, will they take us for gods and not daws—do ye really believe that they can—
If they see us on wings flying idly about?
Peithetærus. Don't say such ridiculous things.
Why, Hermes, and lots of the deities too, go flying about upon wings;
There is Victory bold on her pinions of gold; and then by the Powers there is Love;
And Iris, says Homer, shoots straight through the skies, with the ease of a terrified dove.
(571–575, tr. Rogers.)

In a short parabasis the chorus, now convinced, sing a loose parody of Orphic and Hesiodic cosmogonies; the power of divination possessed by birds gives further support to their claims and other more comic advantages of bird-life are put forward. Peithetærus and Euelpides reappear, each laughing at the other's ridiculous feathered appearance, and the founding of Nephelococcygia begins. The comic representation of the solemn ceremonial accompanying the founding of a city would seem daring, if we did not well remember that to the Greek profanation meant something entirely different and religion in comedy is still religion. It is just because religion played so important a part in the official life of a city that the Athenians enjoyed such scenes as much as they enjoyed, say, the mock-trials in the *Wasps*. There is a rush for official appointments in the new city; particularly amusing is the Oracle-Monger, whose prophecies contain important provisos about gifts for himself; he gets short shrift; apparently oracle-mongers were as much a pest in 414 as in 430.[76] Even Meton, the great calendar reformer, at whom there were jibes in the *Clouds*, cannot get a job here, still less any Athenian officials. Various visitors follow including Prometheus, Zeus' enemy, very careful of himself. He reports that the gods are starving, moreover other gods, Barbarian Triballi, are clamouring for Zeus to reopen the food markets of heaven whence supplies have been cut off. Finally both sets of gods send an embassy, Poseidon, Heracles and the uncouth Triballus who speaks a kind of pidgin Greek. Heracles the glutton is ready to accept any terms in order to proceed at once to the feasting and celebrations and he takes the Barbarian's gibberish as supporting him. In the end Poseidon has to give way and agree to surrender the sceptre of Zeus and the lady Basileia whom Peithetærus is to wed. The *Birds* has one of the best closing scenes in all the comedies and is in other respects a real masterpiece. It contains beautiful lyrics and clever fooling; the chorus of birds, ludicrous in some ways, yet by their very names and number and by their descriptive songs bear witness to Aristophanes' love of nature and the country. In the character of Peithetærus, if instead of looking for Alcibiades, we were to suppose that he is more like our poet himself, we should not be far wide of the mark. He has all the exuberant confidence and ready inventiveness which Aristophanes' plays betoken. He walks boldly into the realm of the Birds, assumes command and makes war on the gods as light-heartedly as the poet attacks Cleon or the Sophists.

---

[76] Thuc. II. 54.

"Lysistrata" (411)

Three years later the Sicilian disaster was over and Athens in the state of political turmoil which led to the oligarchy of the Four Hundred in 411. In that year Aristophanes produced his *Lysistrata* in which the women of all the combatant nations conspire under the leadership of Lysistrata to bring about peace by refusing to cohabit with men while they continue at war. One has the impression that it was written by an author not in the best of health or spirits. There is a great deal of the traditional gross indecency, for which the central idea of the plot was suited; but the chief character Lysistrata is more carefully and skilfully drawn than is usual in Aristophanes and, moreover, is in deadly earnest, and the indecency in no way affects the seriousness of her plea for united action by women to end the war now resumed. The result is a play which it is difficult for us to approach in a proper frame of mind, since it is no part of our tradition to mingle obscene suggestion with serious pleading of a good cause.

"Thesmophoriazusae" (410 ?)

We feel less at sea with the *Thesmophoriazusæ* or Women at the festival of Demeter. On the third day of the festival, to which women only were admitted, a discussion is being held to decide how Euripides is to be punished for his attacks on women. Here is a subject after Aristophanes' own heart. Euripides tries to get the effeminate tragic poet Agathon to go to the meeting and defend him. Agathon refuses but helps to provide Mnesilochus, an elderly relation of Euripides, with the necessary disguise. The chorus of Thesmophoriazusæ enter and the meeting begins. The speakers attack Euripides; it is easy to quote lines from his plays slandering all women, but the amusing thing is that the speakers protest that Euripides has made their husbands so suspicious that their wives get no chance to be indiscreet. The disguised Mnesilochus rises to defend the poet, arguing with not a little indecency that women do far worse things than Euripides ever attributed to them:

> Then what's the odds
> If he does rail at Phædra? Let him rail.
> What's that to us? Let him rail on, say I.
> Phædra indeed! He might come nearer home.
> I knew a woman, I won't mention names,
> Remained ten days in childbirth, Why, do you think?
> Because she couldn't buy a baby sooner.
> (496–503.)[77]

The meeting is in an uproar as he tells one scandalous tale after another. Then word goes round that there is a man in their midst. Mnesilochus is soon caught and discovered. He manages to seize the leading woman's baby and takes refuge at the altar. The baby proves to be a bottle of wine wrapped up; the old man promptly drinks it. After the parabasis Euripides, to whom Mnesilochus has contrived to send a message, comes disguised as Menelaus looking for "Helen" who is still clinging to the altar. The scene is a clever parody of Euripides' *Helena* and it uses the very words of that play with ludicrous effect. Of course no one is deceived, and after a choral song the old man is arrested and put in chains. He is now Andromeda chained to a rock, and sings songs from Euripides' lost play *Andromeda* until Perseus, who is of course Euripides again, comes to the rescue. In the end the women come to terms with the poet, who promises not to abuse them any more if they will set the old rascal, his relation, free. The *Thesmophoriazusæ* is quite as indecent as the *Lysistrata* but it is far more amusing. As a critical estimate of Euripides it is not intended to be taken seriously any more than the occasional jibes in the *Acharnians*. The burlesque is so good-humoured that the over-sensitive Euripides had really little cause for annoyance.

---

[77] Paraphrased B. B. Rogers.

The "Frogs"

The real attack on Euripides comes in the *Frogs*, which was produced in 405, the year after Euripides' death and a year before the surrender of Athens to Lysander. Here the ridicule is severe. No-one, however, will accuse Aristophanes of cowardice or meanness in attacking the poet after his death. If Euripides resented the milder burlesque and parody of earlier plays, the merciless satire of the *Frogs* would have killed the old man. Aristophanes may have disliked much of Euripides but he has no doubt about his merits and rightly regards him as the only tragedian except Sophocles who is worth the trouble of comparing with the great Æschylus (*Frogs*, 71–95). The god Dionysus, accompanied by his servant Xanthias, set out for the land of Hades to find a tragic poet, since there is now none left at Athens. The choice of Dionysus, tragedy's patron, is quite natural but the god in the play is the usual Athenian citizen of comedy. The chorus consists not of frogs, who play but a small part, but initiates (*μύσται*) of the Eleusinian Mysteries. They enter about line 324, warn off the evil-doing and impure, sing hymns to Demeter, Persephone and Iacchus and perform other parts of the procession to Eleusis. Why? Assuredly not for comic effect, since the only comic effects here are the sly asides of the god himself. These scenes are there not in spite of but because of their religious significance, and the *Frogs* more than any other play serves to remind us first, that both tragedy and comedy were parts of a religious festival, second that religious ritual was so much a part of an Athenian's life that the sight of the sacred processions in the *Frogs* or the *Acharnians* would not cause him a moment's surprise.

Dionysus, who at the beginning of the play had called at Heracles' house, asked the way to Hades and borrowed his club and lion-skin, now appears at his destination with his servant. The disguise of the lion-skin was unfortunate since the gluttonous Heracles, slayer of Cerberus, had a bad name in Hades. So whenever any trouble occurs, Dionysus makes Xanthias change clothes with him, but whenever there is anything to be got, dancing girls or food, he is again the master. All this looks like making fun of Theramenes, the trimmer, whose moderate views frequently caused him to be suspected by both sides. Other political allusions are to be found in the play but the outstandingly interesting part of the *Frogs* is the latter half. The newly arrived Euripides claims to sit in the Chair of Tragedy which has always been occupied by Æschylus, whose right not even Sophocles would dispute. Only if Euripides is successful in his claim, will Sophocles endeavour to counter him. A contest is about to be held between Æschylus and Euripides. Dionysus, god of the theatre, is to be judge. The idea of a literary contest was nothing new; not only were the dramatic festivals themselves competitions, but from the earliest times [78] it had been customary for bards to contend in public, each striving to cap the other's verses with something better. Hence the audience would be familiar with this kind of thing and would enjoy it in a comedy. They would also know the dramatic work of the contestants since Euripides was but recently dead and Æschylus' plays were already part of their education. As for the actual dispute in Aristophanes' play there are many hard blows dealt on both sides and if some of it is comic exaggeration, the bulk of it is interesting, if rough and ready, contemporary literary and dramatic criticism. To Euripides, and not to him only but to many theatre-goers in 405, Æschylus was stilted and bombastic, using words which no one could understand, his plays full of interminable choral odes, during which nothing happens and the chief character sits dumb. Euripides claims to have pruned tragedy of bombast, to have made the action move and to have brought tragedy nearer to ordinary human life. Æschylus in reply makes all the old charges against Euripides, that his characters are immoral, ill-behaved and dirty, that he is excessively concerned with sex and that he is irreligious. Thus while Euripides' criticism of Æschylus is true but unfair, Æschylus' remarks are true but to our minds irrelevant. However, the Greeks thought otherwise; they never ceased to regard their poets as teachers. At all events Æschylus is on legitimate ground when he proceeds to make fun of Euripides' stereotyped prologues and musical innovations, and successfully parodies his rival's lyrics. In bringing tragedy nearer to everyday life, he says, Euripides has deprived it of all dignity and imported the language of sophists and rhetoricians and put it into the mouths of heroic personages. Such criticism is fair enough but the chief stress is laid on the effect on fellow-citizens, on the poet as teacher. Æschylus claims that his plays, such as the *Seven against Thebes* and the *Persæ*, teach warlike patriotism while demagogic deceitfulness, dishonest Theramenes, illicit love and adultery are all products of Euripides:

---

[78] Hesiod, *W.D.*, 654–657. The *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, though imaginary and of mixed date and origin, will serve to show the kind of thing.

Euripides. Was then, I wonder, the tale I told of Phædra's passionate love untrue?
Æschylus. Not so: but tales of incestuous vice the sacred poet should hide from view,
Nor ever exhibit and blazon forth on the public stage to the public ken.
For boys a teacher at school is found, but we the poets are teachers of men.
We are bound things honest and pure to speak.
(1052–1056, tr. Rogers.)

Such criticism is thoroughly Greek and we shall meet with it again in Plato. On the whole the scales are held remarkably evenly, though we have scarcely any doubt what the result will be. Dionysus cannot but admire Euripides' cleverness but it is Æschylus who is right. So victory is given to the older poet. The *Frogs* not merely won first prize but a second performance was demanded, not, we are told, for the literary interest of the *Agon* but for the appeal (685 ff.) for generosity towards those who had been exiled before the fall of the Four Hundred. The story is no more improbable than the appointment of Sophocles to be general because he wrote the *Antigone*, but it would be incredible of any people save Aristophanes' own Athenian Demos, who were capable of doing the simplest things for the most outrageous reasons and the most outrageous things for no reason at all.

Final Period (after 400)

Aristophanes had begun his literary career young and he lived long enough not merely to see the Fall of Athens in 404 and the restoration of democratic government after the Rule of the Thirty in the next year but long enough also to be affected by the changed outlook of the post-war world and to be a figure in fourth-century literature as well as fifth. The two surviving comedies of this period, *Ecclesiazusæ* and *Plutus*, are very different from those of the two earlier periods. The traditional elements which we saw making up the Old Comedy were becoming obscured or, like the parabasis, dropped altogether. The generation which liked and insisted on having the old-fashioned methods with their rustic indecency was passing away: even the lyrical beauty of Aristophanes' earlier work no longer found favour. Moreover, the democracy, once so secure that it could allow itself to be laughed at, had been twice ousted and now took fright at ridicule and opposition. They put Socrates to death in 399 and Aristophanes might have suffered a like fate, had he not been careful to confine his satire to generalities. Neither the *Ecclesiazusæ* (*c.* 391) nor the *Plutus*[79] (388) could give offence to the existing government or to any individuals in it.[80] The theme of the former play is developed in an unexpected way. The women of the city having stolen their husbands' clothes and usurped their places in the Assembly (Ecclesia) proceed to make revolutionary proposals — the abolition of all distinction between rich and poor, common ownership of land and other forms of wealth, tickets for meals provided by the State, abolition of home-life and marriage, together with ludicrous restrictions in place of marriage. All this is a parody not of any existing State but of communism like that of the rulers in Plato's *Republic*. Social and economic problems were far more acute and therefore more discussed in the fourth century than in the fifth. What everyone was talking and thinking about would have topical interest as theme of a comedy. In particular the cleavage between rich and poor was much wider. Hence both the mock communism of the *Women in the Assembly* and the redistribution of wealth in the *Plutus* would be thoroughly enjoyed by the audience without giving offence to individuals.

---

[79] Wealth. The second Aristophanic comedy with this name.

[80] This tendency to be careful may have been reinforced by actual legislation on the matter. Schol. Aristoph., *Frogs*, 400; Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 283; but see G. Norwood, *Greek Comedy*, p. 28.

"Plutus" (388)

In the *Plutus* Chremylus and his slave Carion secure the blind god Plutus (Wealth) and with the help of Asclepius restore his eyesight so that he may bestow riches where they are due and not on people like Informers (*συκοφανταί*) who amassed money by threats of litigation. Even the gods are reduced to penury. Hermes, god of thieves, merchants and lucky chances, has no employment, and even Zeus is forced to leave his own temple for that of Plutus. In the *Plutus* even more than in the *Ecclesiazusæ* we realize that comedy has greatly changed. Not only has the traditional form been largely obliterated and the chorus reduced almost to nothingness, but the methods of the New Comedy, comedy of actual life with amusing characters instead of sheer farce, are clearly foreshadowed. Thus the Plutus is a play of transition and an example of how Aristophanes adapted himself to the needs and taste of his time without ceasing to be Aristophanes. Politics had been meat and drink to him as to every fifth-century Athenian; in his early plays he put much of his best into the parabasis of the chorus. These were no more and he missed them both. He did not miss the gross buffoonery, which he had always tried to restrict. Yet the play is still quite Aristophanic and is the last of Old Comedy as well as the first of New or Middle Comedy. It is largely mythological burlesque, which though afterwards very popular, was also quite in the Old Comedy tradition; its mock challenge to the sovereignty of Zeus is reminiscent of the *Birds*, the tables are turned on the greedy Informer in quite the Aristophanic manner. On the other hand the insubordinate food-stealing slave Carion is nothing like Xanthias and is the prototype of one of the stock characters in Menander and Plautus; so too is the worthy Chremylus and his still worthier wife. Again the part of the chorus is almost entirely confined to filling in intervals to denote the passage of time, a fate which also overtook tragic choruses.

Middle Comedy

Of comedy after Aristophanes and before Menander[81] sometimes called Middle Comedy, it is difficult to form a clear conception; we have only a few fragments, remarks on later writers and a list of authors and titles. But the causes which led to the changes which we have already observed were still at work. Comedy became less political and more social; it became more urbane, the obscenities of its rustic original were no longer to the taste of the audience. Exuberant and fantastic ideas did not amuse people who had perforce to interest themselves in their own lives and how to live them. Character and conduct, good men and bad, queer people and normal people, were far more interesting than cities in the air or the politics of an Athens now reduced to a second-rate power. Little wonder that they turned again to Euripides and that the subsequent developments of comedy owed far more to him than to a form of literature which for all its brilliance was essentially the product of a single epoch of a single city — the Old Attic Comedy.

---

[81] See F. A. Wright, *History of Later Greek Literature*, pp. 21–31.

PART FIVE

The Fourth Century

The fall of Athens in 404 is the most important event in Greek history between the Dorian invasion and the battle of Chæronea. It not only meant the end of the Athenian empire but it marks, so far as a single event can do so, the beginning of a new period in Greek history, politics and literature. Many of the changes in the fourth century were already taking place towards the end of the fifth but the great clash between two groups of allies comprising most of the Hellenic race hastened the process. It belongs to the historian to discuss the breaking down of Spartan isolation, the opening of the door to Persian domination in Greek affairs, the growth of mercenary soldiers ready to serve any master anywhere, the decline in agriculture, the rise in prices and the expansion of manufacture based on cheap slave labour, but the whole aspect of the Greek world has changed so much since we looked at it through the eyes of Herodotus that the literature of the period reflects these changes very clearly. The substitution of a Spartan for an Athenian hegemony brought no relief to the cities and islands who had been forced to fight for Athens. The victorious Lysander installed in each city a governing body of ten of his own supporters and made the people pay for a Spartan garrison to keep the Ten in power. In Athens he appointed a commission of Thirty who appear to have done little but abuse their power in order to strengthen their position. This soon led to revolt and the Thirty were expelled. Fortunately the policy of Lysander was not followed a second time and the Spartan authorities allowed the restoration of the democratic constitution (403). This generous treatment was justified, for the new Athenian democracy carried out the peace terms loyally. Many of those who had found war and empire profitable still hoped to revive the Athenian confederacy; their day came some thirty-five years later, but meanwhile Athens was submissive and friendship for Sparta and liking for things Spartan was the fashion.

Athens however is still the literary centre of Greece and it is still against an Athenian background that we must look at literature. Outwardly the life of a citizen in the fourth century had not much changed; he attended the assembly, served as judge, went to theatrical and other festivals, but, accustomed to rule an empire, he found it dull to be concerned only with a single city-state. It seemed to matter little whether he attended the meetings or not, so he frequently stayed away and looked after his own affairs; finally, in order to obtain a quorum, payment for attendance was introduced. This apathy towards politics went along with a very lively interest in one's own welfare. That every citizen owed his service to the State was admitted in theory, but if others could be found to serve for him, so much the better. To the average man it became more important that the State should serve the citizen and keep him provided with food and theatre tickets. So by the middle of the century hundreds were living on a kind of dole. Meanwhile the more able and energetic, if they did not leave the country and seek some more exciting form of service where booty could be won, had been making money by manufacture and sea-borne trade.[1] Those who were cleverer still stayed at home and made large profits by money-lending, banking and insurance.[1] Thus the economic recovery of Athens went ahead briskly and she captured most of the carrying trade between the Aegean and the Black Sea. The development of banking attracted money from other cities and by 377 B.C. Athens was not only the chief financial and commercial centre of Greece but in a position to form a Second Athenian Naval Confederacy which waged another war against Sparta. But the finances of this league were not nearly so strong as those of the Delian Confederacy. There was no huge reserve such as Pericles had accumulated; the State was poor, though many individuals had become rich. Even when this source of wealth had been tapped, it proved impossible to carry on a war which was not really popular since it benefited Thebes more than Athens.

[1] The most successful were often *μέτοικοι*, resident aliens.

The literature produced in such conditions was more in prose than verse. Plenty of verse was written, but it either, like the verse of comedy and tragedy, approached more and more the language of prose, or else, like the poems of Timotheus, became closely wedded to new-fashioned rhythms in music. At the Dionysia old plays were often revived and more attention was paid to the actors than to the poet. Hence plays were sometimes written only to be read, like prose. At all events little of fourth-century verse has survived beyond a string of names and scanty fragments and the Prose literature remains the main object of study. We must therefore pick up at three different points the threads of the narrative which we dropped at the end of Part III, wherein we observed the growth of prose as a medium for History, Philosophy and Oratory. In all three we shall now observe different developments, each pointing in turn in different directions — Xenophon to Hellenistic Common Greek, Plato and Aristotle to the language of metaphysics and science in all tongues, the Orators to the rhythmical prose of Cicero, Sulpicius and others.

Xenophon

Xenophon, soldier, sportsman, historian and dilettante, came of well-to-do Athenian family.[2] Neither his traditions nor his upbringing inclined him to think highly of the warlike demagogy of his city and in common with many others of his class he admired the Spartans and copied their habits before it became generally fashionable. Of his youth there is a story that Socrates, as was his wont, stopped him in the street and asked "Where are men of breeding [3] to be found?" The young man taken aback was unable to answer. "Well, come with me," said Socrates, "and learn." Xenophon accordingly became a visitor to the Socratic circle and, if he was unable to follow the more abstruse arguments, was intelligent enough to learn a great deal from that shrewd and practical old man. But his philosophical studies, such as they were, were abandoned when an opportunity came in 401. Cyrus, the Persian prince and satrap, was about to rebel against his brother King Artaxerxes. Without disclosing his real object he was enrolling many Greeks, chiefly Peloponnesian, in his army. A certain Proxenus a friend of Xenophon sent him an invitation to join the expedition, not in any military capacity but merely as a companion. Xenophon tells us [4] with pleasing frankness how he showed the letter to Socrates, who, feeling that such an act might be disloyal to Athens, advised him to consult the Delphic Oracle. But the young man had naturally made up his mind already and only asked the Oracle how he should sacrifice before departure, not whether he should go at all. That expedition is the subject of his most famous book, the *Anabasis*. On his return he joined the Spartan forces then in Asia Minor and in 394 we find him in arms at the battle of Coronea on the side of Sparta against Thebes and Athens. A decree of banishment naturally followed [5] and he purchased [6] an estate near Scillus about twenty furlongs from Olympia on the Laconian road. Here, for he was a pious man and a keen huntsman, he built a temple to Artemis. The land provided barley, wheat, wine and delicacies. Hunting was good and he and his sons welcomed their neighbours also to the chase. Here he lived a life after his own heart, dividing his time between sport, agriculture and literature;. for it was here that he began to write. But in 370 the Thebans, not the Spartans, were masters in Greece and he was forced to leave Scillus. The Athenians, now allied with Sparta against Thebes, revoked his banishment; his two sons assumed their Athenian citizenship, one of them fell at Mantinea in 362. He died either at Corinth or Athens probably about 355.

---

[2] The date of his birth is uncertain; probably about 434: this agrees with what is known of his life but not with the story of Socrates saving his life at Delium in 424. But this is a hardly credible tale, since he was but a young man in 401 (*Anab.*, iii. 1. 25).

[3] If we may so paraphrase *καλοὶ κἀγαθοί*.

---

[4] *Anab.*, iii. i. 4–8.

[5] We do not know the date of his banishment, but the supposition seems reasonable.

[6] His property at Athens had been confiscated but he had enriched himself appropriating the wealth of a rich Persian in Asia Minor.

The writings of this able but not very original man may be divided into three groups — historical, educational, philosophical. His narrative style is generally plain and easy. His occasional attempts at more elaborate writing are unsuccessful. Stylists like Dionysius of Halicarnassus thought him far inferior to the orators, and pedants like Phrynichus the grammarian did not always like his grammar or vocabulary. But he wrote such Greek as everybody could read and would soon write; he is the forerunner of the Hellenistic *κοινή*. Occasionally he seems to model himself on one or other of his two great predecessors; but if he has the simplicity of Herodotus, he has none of his charm, and while he has some of the solemnity of Thucydides he has neither his insight nor his power. He is a good example of the truth of "*Le style, c'est l'homme.*"

Xenophon's Historical Works

The soldier-sportsman who writes of his own experiences of war and adventure is nearly always sure of a good public and it is easy to understand why the *Anabasis* of Xenophon has been one of the world's most popular books. Ten thousand[7] Greek troops accompanied Cyrus on his march from Sardis to the interior. They did not know the purpose for which they had been hired and it was with difficulty that Cyrus induced them to proceed through Phrygia, Cilicia and Syria to the Euphrates. When the two Persian princes met in battle at Cunaxa, Cyrus was slain and the Greek troops, who had been successful in their part of the fight, found themselves in a hostile land, hundreds of miles from home, without paymaster or purpose (Book i.[8]). To make the situation worse their own leaders and senior officers were treacherously put to death by Tissaphernes in spite of his promise of a safe-conduct (Book ii.). This predicament was Xenophon's opportunity.

---

[7] A round number. There were over 12,000 at Cunaxa of whom not more than half returned.

[8] The name *Anabasis*, "march inland," applies strictly only to the first book.

He tells us, speaking of himself in the third person,[9] that a certain Xenophon, an Athenian, advised by a dream, urged them to give up trying to bargain with a treacherous foe and fight their way home by another route. So began the famous march of the Ten Thousand. Xenophon, who had hitherto been only an interested observer, now finds himself the guiding spirit of an adventure which had begun as a rebellion and was now an attempt to escape. So we have a more detailed and personal account in Books iii.–vii. than in the first two. Harried first by Tissaphernes the Persian and then by hostile and warlike tribes, they make their way northwards, battling with heavy snow and intense cold, losing their direction and following streams the wrong way, till finally, reaching the Black Sea, they cry *θάλαττα θάλαττα*. The sea to the Greeks was not a barrier but a link. At the Greek city of Trapezus (Trebizond) they celebrated their deliverance in true Hellenic manner by a thanksgiving to the gods and an athletic contest. The ground was like iron and the slope steep but everyone enjoyed it, and Xenophon says "It was a grand sight." [10] Unfortunately (Bk. v.) their efforts to obtain ships had met with little success and the feeding of 8600 troops was becoming increasingly embarrassing to the inhabitants. So sending only women and sick men (they had had women with them all along) by sea they started off along the bad roads on the south side of the Black Sea, knowing that they would not be welcome in any city but hoping that the inhabitants would be the more willing to help them to continue their journey. Xenophon seems to be more than ever the leading figure; discipline was in danger of breaking down; in the mountains of Armenia common danger had kept the men together since disunion would have meant the ruin of all. Now there was danger of the force splitting and

---

[9] This suggests that the work may possibly have been first published anonymously, but if so the veil was very thin, since he tells us the dream in detail. In *Hellenica*, iii. 1 he says that the story of the expedition was told by Timogenes of Syracuse. I think this is another attempt at concealment, not an allusion to an earlier *Anabasis* (T. is unknown). Xenophon was more anxious to secure military than literary renown.

[10] *καλὴ θέα ἐγένετο*, iv. 8. 27.

Xenophon does not deny himself the credit of having held them together. Our interest does not lessen after leaving Trapezus, indeed in some ways Xenophon improves. Some of his descriptions are almost worthy of Herodotus, for example his account of the Tower-dwellers (Mossynœci) where they intervened in a civil war:

> Those who took part in the expedition used to say[11] that these were the most foreign of peoples and the farthest removed from Greek customs. For when in public they were wont to do just those things which men would do in private and when they were alone they acted as if they were in company, they would talk to themselves, laugh at themselves, stop anywhere and start dancing as if they were showing off to others.
>
> (v. 4. 34.)

The greatness of Xenophon's achievement is further brought out in the two concluding books: how in spite of disappointment and opposition he succeeded in arranging for transport by sea from Cotyora to Sinope and thence to Heraclea (Paphlagonia), a distance of some 300 miles, how again and again he talked over disgruntled and mutinous men, not by oratory, for his speeches are mostly plain and soldierly, but by sheer force of character and soundness of training, until finally he handed over his depleted force to a Spartan commander. On the other hand, it should be remembered that we have only Xenophon's word for the importance of his part in the achievement. Other contemporary references to the expedition attribute no such leadership to Xenophon, and we are driven to the conclusion that the *Anabasis*, though it is Xenophon's best book, was a piece of propaganda and self-vindication.

Much less interesting is the *Hellenica*, though for historians it is Xenophon's most important work. Taking up the Peloponnesian War where Thucydides broke off (411 B.C.) he continues in Book i. with the war down to

---

[11] Such expressions are not uncommon; they may be attempts at anonymity; cp. above, note 9.

Arginusæ in 406. The second book tells how Lysander with the help of money from Cyrus brought about the fall of Athens and the establishment of the Thirty, then how they fell. Books iii.–vii. continue the history of Greece down to Mantinea (362) in an unsystematic way with many omissions. The first two books seem to have been written before 377 at the latest, since the Athenians are spoken of at the end of Book ii. as still loyal to the peace terms. In these two books, moreover, Xenophon makes some attempt to copy Thucydides' annalistic method and his original intention may have been to stop there. When he resumed and continued the history of the fourth century, his methods are more haphazard and his partiality for Sparta more marked. There is another break at the end of the third chapter of Book v., a few years after the Peace of Antalcidas in 386. He has described the Spartan hegemony under Agesilaus; now, evidently writing after Leuctra (371), he makes a fresh start telling us that there are many instances in Greek and Persian history of the gods neglecting the impious and wrongdoers, and that the decline of the Spartan power is a case in point, since they broke their oath to respect the autonomy of the Greek cities by seizing the Cadmea. So from v. 4 to the end of Book vii. his object is to show that the decline of Sparta was due to their own impiety and not to the power of Thebes. He misunderstands and misrepresents the national movement in Thebes under Pelopidas and Epaminondas, the former being scarcely mentioned and the latter's greatness as a soldier quite unrecognized, and he tries to cast the blame on Thebes for the raid of Sphodrias on Attica (v. 4. 20). Thus Thucydides was unlucky in his continuator and Xenophon unwise to assume his mantle. The style is uneven, owing to the long period over which it was written; the speeches sometimes afford relief from the pedestrian narrative, sometimes add to its dulness, and, in spite of some interesting sidelights such as the usurpation by a certain Midias of the kingdom of Æolis (iii. 1. 14–28), it is far inferior to the *Anabasis*. Agesilaus, the author's hero, is the subject of a short work bearing his name.

It is not a *Life* but an encomium[12] and it adds little to the information contained in the *Hellenica;* rather it is a tedious panegyric which could have been shortened with advantage. The *Constitution of the Lacedæmonians* may also be counted among the historical works. It is not — unfortunately — a description of contemporary Sparta, but for the first ten chapters an account of the early law giver Lycurgus, for the rest notes on the Spartan army.[13]

Other Fourth-Century Historians

The history of Thucydides found other continuators for the period 411–394. They were Cratippus and Theopompus. The former was the elder and was probably senior to Xenophon. The surviving fragments are almost negligible but Dionysius of Halicarnassus tells us[14] that Cratippus, considering the speeches in Thucydides to be burdensome to the reader and to interrupt the narrative, included none in his history. Theopompus made some use of Xenophon's *Hellenica* for his own work of the same name. He also wrote an immense *Philippica* of fifty-eight books on Philip of Macedon. Both works are lost save for fragments. He was renowned for his painstaking care in the collection of material; he spent much time and money going everywhere to see for himself and talking to leading statesmen and generals. He was a pupil of Isocrates whom he resembled in a diction which was clear, smooth-flowing and free from local peculiarities. But when he had occasion to find fault with governments and generals his language was more bitter than that of his master.[15] Another pupil of Isocrates was Ephorus whose work we know chiefly through the historian Diodorus Siculus (*c.* 30 B.C.) and the geographer Strabo (*c.* A.D. 24) who incorporated in their work pieces of Ephorus' *Universal History.* Ephorus had access to sources and writers denied to us and is therefore historically valuable and he was praised by so good an historian as Polybius.[16] According to Dionysius he was but an imperfect copy of his master, being careful and rhythmical but lacking in vigour. Isocrates is reputed to have said of his two pupils that Theopompus needed the rein, Ephorus the spur. Our fragments of Ephorus are not impressive as literature; those of Theopompus are fewer and so many of them are mere anecdotes preserved by Athenæus that it is difficult to estimate him fairly.

---

[12] Suggested perhaps by the *Evagoras* of Isocrates.

[13] On the *Constitution of the Athenians* wrongly attributed to Xenophon.

[14] *De Thuc.*, 16.

[15] Our information is again from Dionysius (*Ad Pomp.*, 6. See Jacoby, *Frag. Gr. Hist.*, ii., p. 530) but other critics, *e.g.* "Longinus" (*Subl.*, 43) speak of his style with less approval, while not denying him merit (*ibid.*, 31).

"Hellenica Oxyrhynchia"

The question has acquired additional importance since the discovery in 1906 of a papyrus known as the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*,[17] which has been ascribed in turn to Theopompus, Ephorus and Cratippus. It consists of twenty-one columns each of about 37 lines. Some of the lines exist only in half or less and there is hardly a line without a gap of words or letters which have been restored conjecturally. Still we have at any rate some sixteen pages of readable Greek text, an unusually large amount among the Oxyrhynchus papyri. The text deals with Greek history in 396–395 B.C. From whatever work these fragments come, their author was a worthier successor to Thucydides than Xenophon. Not only does his narrative style recall that of the great historian at times, but he has something too of his predecessor's power of description and eye for important detail. The account of the constitution of Bœotia (col. xi. 34–col. xii. 31) is most valuable, so too is the information about Agesilaus in Asia and the exploits of Conon the Athenian admiral who, without taking part himself, brought about the overthrow of the pro-Spartan oligarchy at Rhodes [18]:

> Every day he trained his soldiers in arms by the harbour, ostensibly in order to prevent them from be-

---

[16] xii. 28. 10.

[17] *Ox. Pap.*, 842, vol. 5, p. 110 ff.

[18] Col. xi., p. 169.

> coming stale, but really because he did not wish to put his plan into operation until he had accustomed the Rhodians to the sight of men under arms.

When the day appointed came he had already disappeared; the presence of armed men caused no alarm and the conspirators took post both in the market-place and by the harbour.

> A certain Dorimachus, mounting the stone platform which was used for proclamations, shouted at the top of his voice: "Let us be off, fellow-citizens," he cried, "with all speed against the tyrants."

When Conon returned, the oligarchs had been expelled and an anti-Spartan democracy set up at Rhodes. This interesting event is passed over in silence by Xenophon.

The authorship of this document is a matter of dispute. It is so good that it is hardly likely that his name would be unknown, but to which of the three known fourth-century historians is it to be assigned?[19] At first sight it seems most likely that it is from the *Hellenica* of Theopompus. The years 396–395 fall within the compass of that work (411–394) and the general manner of the writing suits what we know of him, but modern historians[20] have found chronological and other objections.[21] On the other hand, if it comes from Ephorus, how can we explain the wealth of detail? It would be out of all proportion in a Universal History. Again it may be from Cratippus' continuation of Thucydides; there are no speeches and the method is at many points quite Thucydidean. But we know little about Cratippus, and if the case for him seems strong it is chiefly because we have nothing with which to combat it. The style of the fragments which survive in literary sources does not decisively point to any one of the three.[22]

---

[19] It is not by Xenophon and everything points to a writer of the fourth century.

[20] *E.g.* E. M. Walker (Ephorus) and C. F. Lehmann-Haupt (Cratippus).

[21] *E.g.* that passages in it show that it must have been written before 356 and that as Theopompus was born in 377, we would have to suppose that he had practically finished his *Hellenica* at 22. Eduard Meyer disputes all this.

Xenophon's Educational Works: "Cyropaedia"

Xenophon, for all his faults as an historian, was a man of wide culture and varied knowledge, which he disseminated in a number of educational and philosophical works. Of the educational works the chief is *Education of Cyrus* in eight books. Cyrus is the great Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire who died in 529, and while much is pure fiction, there is a good deal that is historical. But historical accuracy was not the aim of the book, which is a kind of synthesis of Xenophon's ideas about education, both political and military. The title belongs strictly only to the first book which deals with the boyhood of Cyrus, but the whole of the teaching is put in the form of a kind of historical romance about the great Persian. Xenophon's idea of the perfect ruler is a mixture of Spartan and Persian virtues and training. We follow the prince's early education when he learns to hunt, then to become a soldier, an officer, a general, a conqueror, an organizer and finally a ruler. He founds a city; there is to be but one city in the kingdom — a typically Greek touch. There is to be a health service and a matrimonial agency. Elaborate court ritual and order of precedence are described, but alongside the etiquette of the Persian court there are exercises in tactics on the Spartan model. Thus Xenophon in the *Cyropædia*, like Plato in the *Republic*, sketches an Ideal Commonwealth. Their methods of approach are quite different but both fully realize the urgent need for something to replace the crumbling systems of Greece. The *Cyropædia* is a long and tedious work but in one respect it holds a unique place in literature. Parts of it are a kind of forerunner of the historical novel. Not only is the career of Cyrus imaginatively treated but an element of romance is introduced, notably in the story of Cyrus' loyal follower Abradatas and his devoted wife Panthea. Doubtless, however, Xenophon believed chiefly in the educational value of his work. Of more practical value were the handbooks, *The Cavalry Commander* and *On Horsemanship.* Here Xenophon's knowledge was that of an expert. In the former he writes for the benefit of his countrymen at Athens where he had probably served in the cavalry and gives us some useful historical information. It is a straightforward and sensible little work, which lays due emphasis on the powerlessness of cavalry without infantry co-operation. The περὶ ἱππικῆς is more difficult to read, but it deals in a practical way with the buying, stabling, exercising and riding of horses and their training and arming for war. Training for the cavalry was the chief object of horsemanship, hence in the treatise on *Hunting* (Cynegetica) riding is scarcely mentioned. Hunting, whether of hare, boar or deer, was usually but not necessarily done on foot. The *Cynegetica* lacks the orderliness of the *Horsemanship;* the parts of the subject are treated in a haphazard and confused way, and it may well be spurious. The procemium is almost certainly not by Xenophon but by some rhetorician of the Greek Renaissance of the second century A.D.

---

[22] *Ox. Pap.*, No. 1610 (vol. xiii.) is a fragment of Ephorus but it neither proves nor disproves the ascription to him of No. 842.

Other Writers of Handbooks: Aeneas Tacticus

There were others besides Xenophon who made a special study of war. Among them was Æneas of Stymphalus in Arcadia. The decline of the Spartan power in the Peloponnese after 371 led to the rise of a league of Arcadian cities. One of the generals of the league was Æneas who wrote a series of handbooks on War, on Campaigning, Finance, Preparation for War, Siegecraft, etc. Of these the last named, the πολιορκητικά, has come down to us. The subject is the defence of a besieged city. The instruction is enlivened by illustrations from recent history, some being taken direct from Herodotus and Thucydides. The tenth chapter is of particular interest; the writer recommends the censorship of letters, registration of aliens and a curfew. Much space is devoted to measures for combating treachery, a constant danger in Greek warfare, more particularly now that soldiers were generally mercenaries, not a citizen army. Æneas has a liking for ingenious devices for various purposes, repelling assaults by ram or scaling-ladder, quenching fires, countermining, and an especial liking for secret messages and ciphers, ranging from the method of dots under letters in an innocent communication to a complicated arrangement of string passed through holes in a block of wood, each hole being a letter. He admits that this method is troublesome and that "it is an even greater nuisance to decipher than to make such a message" (xxxi. 17–19). He says it is often useful to make one's force appear larger than it is; for example in chap. xl. we read:

> The men of Sinope, when at war with Datamas were in a critical position and in want of men. They therefore disguised and armed the fittest of their women, so as to make them look as much like men as they could, and gave them jars and similar brass utensils to represent armour and helmets, and marched them round the walls in full view of the enemy. They were not allowed to throw anything: for you can tell a woman a long way off by the way she throws.[23]

Æneas is not a great writer but his matter is often interesting. His language resembles that of Xenophon; that is to say, it is not pure literary Attic but the *koine* which was now rapidly taking shape. That it should have been written by an Arcadian shows how much the weakening of local autonomy and the spread of Greek soldiers and traders had affected the general level of culture everywhere.

Xenophon's Philosophical Works

Xenophon did not forget his early association with Socrates but took part in the controversies which sprang up about his old master in the years following his execution in 399. As with his other works it is nearly impossible to arrange Xenophon's Socratic writings in chronological order; it seems likely that the little *Defence of Socrates* (ἀπολογία Σωκράτους) was the earliest but it was certainly written some years after the trial. It is not, like Plato's *Apology*, intended to be a speech, but a very brief account of some aspects of the trial. Xenophon was with the expedition of Cyrus at the time of Socrates' death and he relied for his information on Hermogenes, one of Socrates' friends.[24] There had been other pamphlets in defence of Socrates,[25] he tells us (§ 1), but none of them had shown that his readiness to die was the result of a conviction that for him it was better to die than to live. Then Hermogenes describes Socrates' defence in respect of the charge of godlessness, but Xenophon does not pretend that the account is complete (§ 22). A much more important work is the *Memorabilia* (ἀπομνημονεύματα Σωκράτους) in four books. It is a collection rather than a single work and was certainly written and probably published different parts at different times. It looks at the beginning as if Xenophon, wishing to amplify his little work in defence of Socrates,[26] and because controversy about him was still raging, first wrote an essay describing Socrates' respect for religion and distrust of οἱ τὰ θεῖα ζητοῦντες, and emphasizing his practical common sense as a student of human nature. This is the first chapter of Book i. of the *Memorabilia*. The second chapter is another essay [27]; it defends Socrates on the charge of corrupting youth. His accusers had made much of the fact that such opponents of democracy as Critias and Alcibiades had been among his pupils. Xenophon retorts that they had only used Socrates as a means to make themselves clever speakers, that their faults were not due to Socrates who had done his best to improve their characters. The third chapter opens with words: "In order to show that I am right in believing that he exercised a good influence on those who were in contact with him I will now set forth what I can remember both of the words and the deeds which show what manner of man he was." Thus begin the *Memoirs* proper. There is no reason to suppose that these random recollections are not all by Xenophon, but in many cases it is difficult to believe that Xenophon was actually present or even that the alleged conversation ever took place at all. Socrates may well have had discussions with Antiphon the Sophist (Bk. i.). He may have reprimanded his own son for disrespect towards his mother Xanthippe or admonished two brothers on the futility of their quarrel, but one can hardly believe that Xenophon was standing by during domestic scenes (Bk. ii.). We do not see much of the profound thinker about Socrates, but that may be because we are looking through the eyes of Xenophon who had no philosophical bent of his own. But there were some things about which Xenophon knew more than Socrates; the first seven chapters of the third book look like a single work on generalship which Xenophon puts into the mouth of Socrates, but which is chiefly Xenophon.[28] Chapter eight just happens to be a discussion on the Good and the Beautiful with the philosopher Aristippus. In other conversations Socrates is seen advising one young man to take more exercise, another not to be greedy, or giving hints to a beautiful prostitute on the attraction of men. How much of all this actually took place, it is idle to enquire. The fourth book is certainly a separate work; its subject is education. It is much less of a random miscellany than the other books, though the dialogue form is not maintained throughout. The last chapter again (cp. *Apology*) refers to his last days as recounted by Hermogenes and concludes with the well-known eulogy:

---

[23] Tr. L. W. Hunter and S. A. Handford. (Clarendon Press.)

---

[24] Plato, *Phædo*, 59 B.

[25] It is uncertain whether Plato's *Apology* preceded Xenophon's. On the other side there was at least one κακηγορία, which its author Polycrates puts in the mouth of Anytus, one of the accusers; the charge was dangerousness to the State.

[26] Of course it is by no means certain that *Mem.*, i. chaps. 1–2 were not written before the *Apology*.

[27] It is nearly twice as long as the *Defence*.

> For myself, I have described him as he was: so religious that he did nothing without counsel from the gods; so just that he did no injury, however small, to any man, but conferred the greatest benefits on all

---

[28] Much of it is also found in the *Cyropædia*.

> who dealt with him; so self-controlled that he never chose the pleasanter rather than the better course; so wise that he was unerring in his judgment of the better and the worse, and needed no counsellor, but relied on himself for his knowledge of them; masterly in expounding and defining such things; no less masterly in putting others to the test, and convincing them of error and exhorting them to follow virtue and gentleness. To me, then, he seemed to be all that a truly good and happy man must be. But if there is any doubter, let him set the character of other men beside these things; then let him judge.[29]

Readers of the *Memorabilia* cannot but wonder how much of it all is historically true of Socrates. The question [30] does not admit of a definite and confident answer. Xenophon in his educational and philosophical works was not aiming at historical accuracy but at instruction and morality. The account of Socrates in the *Memorabilia* is probably not any more accurate than that of Cyrus in the *Cyropædia.* If Xenophon gave rein to his imagination in one work, he may well have done the same in the other. But just as there is some historical truth in the *Cyropædia,* so there is some in the Recollections. How much it is impossible to say, because while we have some independent information about Cyrus, we have practically none about Socrates.[31]

The single book of the *Œconomicus* opens abruptly with the words "I once heard him also hold the following discussion on Estate Management." The reference is of course to Socrates and it was naturally supposed that this was another book of the *Memorabilia* in which it might as fitly hold a place as Book iv. But whether by accident or design the *Estate Management* has come down to us as a separate work while the *Education* (*Mem.*, iv.) has not. Its subject is more practical and educational than philosophical but it must be classed among the

---

[29] iv. 8. 11, tr. E. C. Marchant.

[30] See also p. 320.

[31] See Part III, p. 179.

Socratic dialogues. It is, however, farther removed from the historical Socrates than the *Memorabilia*. For five chapters Socrates is made to discuss with a certain Critobulus the nature of wealth, the necessity of scientific agriculture, with surprising references to the King of the Persians' way of managing his royal estates and a still more surprising allusion to the march and death of Cyrus. Then in the sixth chapter, apparently realizing that apart from the anachronisms he was putting most unlikely statements into the mouth of Socrates, he begins to represent him only as reporting what he had heard from a certain Ischomachus. This person, who is stated to have had the reputation of being a perfect gentleman, is probably imaginary, and we can hardly be wrong in seeing in him a picture of Xenophon as he would like to be seen. At all events the idea was a good one; the book is greatly brightened up by the conversations of Ischomachus and his model wife, whom he admonishes on the virtues and beauty of tidiness, having a proper place for everything, and "when we have put it there we must instruct the maid, when she takes it out, to put it back again in the same place" (ix. 10). The orderliness of a big ship excites his admiration and a perfectly aligned row of shoes or dishes warms the heart of Xenophon the Inspecting Officer. This dutiful wife had once to be reproved for making up her face, but only once (x. 2). Ischomachus holds the field till chapter xxi. and proceeds to tell Socrates the principles on which he works in managing servants, choosing a land-steward, and carrying out various agricultural operations. It is an interesting and valuable glimpse of Xenophon's estate at Scillus and of the improved agricultural methods of the Fourth Century.

The *Banquet* or *Symposium* like the *Apology* suffers by comparison with the perfect artistry of Plato's work of the same name. But if the conversation at Plato's banquet reached a higher level, the party at Callias' house would have been more amusing to see. The guests indulge in banter and back-chat. One of them, a professional diner-out who had come uninvited, has to try his jokes several times. But they are not dependent on themselves for their amusement; the host has provided a troup of entertainers and the haphazard discussions are interrupted by watching the Syracusan's acrobats and dancers, while Socrates draws moral observations from their skill. As in Plato's *Symposium* Love is discussed, and the party ends with a love-scene enacted by the troup designed to arouse the amorous feelings of the guests. It succeeds in its object. The *Hiero* is not a Socratic dialogue but an imaginary conversation supposed to take place in the early part of the previous century (478–467) between Hiero of Syracuse, Pindar's patron, and Simonides of Ceos, one of the poets who was at his court. Its theme is a stock one, that a despot is less happy than his subjects but that he may by winning their affection find happiness for himself. There is little characterization and no attempt at historical truth. Hiero is merely a type of good despot. Simonides, too, might be any poet. At chapter viii. Xenophon discards the disguise and speaks as himself. What is apparently Xenophon's last work, the πόροι or *Ways and Means*, is an interesting little work on the economic and financial condition of Athens probably about the year 355. The system of free gifts by the State is unavoidable, but Attica could be financially self-sufficient if money were raised by an income-tax and by the State acting as trader, by building hotels for merchants and visitors and by encouraging the immigration of aliens and improving their status.

Other Socratic Discourses

Xenophon and Plato were not the only writers of Socratic dialogues, and before passing to Plato it will be convenient here to mention the chief of these — Æschines of Sphettus (the "Socratic") whose extant fragments have been usefully increased by the discovery of a papyrus[32] containing parts of his dialogue *Alcibiades*. The dialogue is not set down directly but reported by one of the speakers, Socrates; this is an artistic device which Plato also uses. Alcibiades speaks slightingly of Themistocles' ability. Socrates defends him and gives him credit for some knowledge — knowledge which Alcibiades must also seek if he is to be successful in affairs of state. In view of the fact that Alcibiades' political career was one of baseness and treachery and that his early association with Socrates was held to be accountable for it, it is likely that Æschines here, like Xenophon in *Memorabilia* i. 2, is making a defence for Socrates on the charge of corrupting the young. In his *Aspasia* Socrates discusses education and cites Aspasia as a woman capable of sound practical teaching.[33] So far as they go, these and other fragments of Æschines' dialogues seem to portray Socrates chiefly as a practical adviser in matters of conduct, a picture generally like that which Xenophon gives us. Little can be affirmed of the dialogues of Antisthenes, a philosopher contemporary with Socrates and one from whom Xenophon drew much, or of the works of Aristippus of Cyrene, a close friend of Socrates, or of Eucleides of Megara, whom Plato visited.

---

[32] *Ox. Pap.*, 1608, vol. 13.

Plato

By far the greatest writer of philosophical dialogues was Plato son of Ariston. He was born at Athens about 427 B.C. and was therefore a mere child when Aristophanes made fun of Socrates in the *Clouds* (423). At what age he first joined the group of young men around Socrates we do not know but according to Aristotle he had already been a pupil of Cratylus, so he can hardly have been less than seventeen when Socrates would have been about sixty. At all events, he was a member of the Socratic circle for some ten years. During this period of his life he had political ambitions but the older he grew the more impossible did it seem to him to establish good government. In particular the failure of the Thirty and their attempts to implicate Socrates in their abuses made him despair of politics at Athens. The restored democracy put his beloved master to death and he turned his back on Athenian politics. Yet to the end of his life statecraft remained one of his chief interests but

---

[33] Plato in the *Menexenus* also makes Socrates speak highly of Aspasia.

> while I did not cease to consider means of improving this particular situation and indeed of reforming the whole constitution, yet in regard to action, I kept waiting for favourable moments, and finally saw clearly in regard to all states now existing that without exception their system of government is bad.[34]

Soon after the execution of Socrates in 399 Plato and some others not unnaturally left Athens for a time. They went first to Megara to the philosopher Eucleides, after which Plato seems to have visited Egypt and to have returned to Athens about 396. He may have written the *Apology* and some earlier dialogues before 389 when he went to Italy and Sicily. At Tarentum he knew Archytas the Pythagorean and at Syracuse he met Dion, then about twenty years of age, who responded to his teaching more keenly and enthusiastically than any young man he had ever met.[35] By 387 he was in Athens again and founded his Academy a few years after Isocrates had founded his school. Plato's model was rather the Pythagorean societies which he learned to know in Italy, but we are unfortunately ill informed about the management of this famous institution. The methods of instruction may have included formal lectures and certainly included oral discussion. This we should expect in any case, but we have actually a piece of parody of the classes at the Academy in a fragment of the Middle Comedy writer Epicrates, who depicts a group of boys discussing the proper classification of a pumpkin. But while elementary natural science may have been taught, Plato's own interests lay more in mathematics and politics, which were advanced subjects of scientific research. Among famous mathematicians connected with the Academy were Eudoxus and Theaetetus who invented solid geometry. Aristotle was its most famous student. The direction of this new institution kept Plato busy at Athens for some twenty years, but when in 368 Dionysius I of Syracuse died, Plato's friend Dion, uncle of the new monarch Dionysius II, invited Plato to come to Syracuse and put his political theories into practice by making the young man a philosopher-king. "Now if ever," Dion wrote to him, "will be realized any hope there is that the world will ever see the same man both philosopher and ruler of a great city." [36] Plato came but enemies of Dion spread a rumour, which was easily believed, that the whole affair was but a scheme of Dion's to get power into his own hands and usurp the throne. Dion was banished and in 366 Plato left Sicily. In 362 Dionysius himself invited him to return to Syracuse, but without Dion, and Plato somewhat reluctantly accepted. This attempt was also a failure; Dionysius' devotion to philosophy was not genuine. This time Plato had much difficulty in getting away from Syracuse and when the exiled Dion led a revolt against Dionysius II in 357, Plato took no active part. After Dion's death he wrote the famous seventh letter to the rebels. He probably spent the remainder of his life at Athens, where he died in 347.

---

[34] *Epistle*, vii. 326 *c*, tr. L. A. Post.

[35] *Ep.*, vii. 327 *a*.

The Platonic Dialogue: Sophron

Plato holds a unique place in the literary history of the philosophic dialogue. In some respects he may be compared to Æschylus who did so much in the making of Tragedy, but none of Plato's successors and imitators, whether in Greek, French or English, made any improvements or even came near to him in language or feeling. We have said something of his predecessors and of his contemporary Xenophon, but they are as nothing beside Plato. Yet the Platonic dialogue is such a highly-finished work of art that we may legitimately suppose that it has a long literary history behind it, for the writing of which our material is defective. We have, however, one fact in addition to the existence of other Socratic dialogues, namely, that Plato introduced into Athens the Sicilian Mimes of Sophron and that they were his favourite bedside book. Now we have already noted the contribution which the racy Sicilian humour of Epicharmus [37] made to the development of comedy, and the humorous sketch[38] or mime long remained a favourite amusement in Sicily and South Italy. Towards the end of the fifth century there lived at Syracuse a writer Sophron who appears to have been the first to give the name mime to sketches in prose which, whether they were meant for performance or not, were certainly read as literature. Some 180 fragments remain but, since they have mostly come down to us as citations to illustrate his Doric dialect of Syracuse, they are all too short.[39] We know the titles of some of the mimes, *e.g. ταὶ γυναῖκες αἳ τὰν θεόν φαντι ἐξελᾶν* which inspired the Pharmaceutria (*Idyll* ii.) of Theocritus[40] and *ταὶ θάμεναι τὰ Ἴσθμια* which inspired the Adoniazusæ (xv.). He was also the inspiration of Herodas and of Bœotus, Rhinthon and other writers of literary mimes in Alexandrian times. It is therefore most unfortunate that we do not possess the works of so influential a writer and so are unable to estimate how far Diogenes Laertius was right in saying that Plato modelled his style on the mimes of Sophron. One thing is certain, that some of the dialogues of Plato are highly dramatic and show such skill in character drawing that we feel that the world lost a great comic dramatist when Plato took to philosophy.

---

[36] *Ep.*, vii. 328 *a*, tr. the same.

[37] See Part IV, notes 51, 73, 74. Some of Epicharmus' fragments (*e.g.* 170, 171) look exactly like parodies of Plato; hence they are generally

The Dialogue Form in Plato

Plato, like Pindar, was a careful and conscious artist, but unlike him he does not glory in his art; he takes

---

regarded as spurious; but at least the association of philosophy and dialogue or drama is as old as Epicharmus' *Logos and Logina*.

[38] The entertainers who played the sketch in Xenophon's *Symposium* were from Syracuse.

[39] A papyrus fragment of about 15 short lines has been published by M. Norsa and G. Vitelli (*Stud. Ital. di Filologia Classica*, 1933, N.S., vol 10., p. 119) who regard it as part of the mime of Sophron — women calling up the goddess. The fragment deals with the preparation of a dog for sacrifice to Hecate and consists of commands, do this, do that. Hence it can well be imagined that it would lend itself to performance, the speaker or others doing the things commanded.

[40] On the bearing of the new Sophron fragment on this point see A. F. S. Gow in *Class. Rev.*, xlvii., 1933, p. 113.

pains to conceal it. Words flow from his pen like those of a fluent talker. The time and the place where the conversation is supposed to have taken place are often skilfully introduced; sometimes the whole is narrated by someone present and the narrator describes details of place and scenery. Often the tedium of protracted dialogue is broken by a descriptive interlude in which perhaps one of the interlocutors loses his temper or another tries to secure more than his share of "holding the floor." The characters themselves are actual persons no longer alive when Plato was writing but they are not mere mouthpieces but are made to live. We know Plato's brothers Glaucon and Adimantus better than we know Plato himself. Simmias and Cebes who were with Socrates when he died are almost our friends. But Plato found his richest material in the lives and reputations of the great philosophers of earlier generations; Protagoras, Gorgias, Parmenides, Hippias appear vividly before us in dialogues called after them, while of Socrates Plato has given us so clear a picture that many readers are left with the conviction that the Platonic Socrates must be the real Socrates. Such a conviction is due more to the art of Plato than to any positive argument. We have practically no independent knowledge of Socrates, no means of knowing a single word that he ever spoke, whether he ever discussed the subjects treated by Plato, still less in what terms. The Platonic dialogue was never intended to be an historical narrative but a dramatic sketch, introducing persons who had really lived in character such as Plato believed them to have been. Socrates is only one of many who appear both in Plato and in other writers. Apart from those common to Xenophon and Plato it is worth noting that Callias appears in Æschines, that the name of Chærephon is constantly coupled with that of Socrates in the *Clouds* and that Alcibiades is the chief figure in three dialogues named after him written by Plato, Æschines and Antisthenes. So that behind the dialogue form there seems to lie a literary tradition covering not merely the framework and manner of presentation but the very characters themselves. Just as different dramatists wrote plays about Agamemnon and Orestes, so various dialogue writers used Socrates and Alcibiades.

Still, Plato's choice of the dialogue form was not simply due to his dramatic qualities and love of character drawing. He believed that verbal discussion was the only means of arriving at truth; the set speeches of Protagoras were merely expressions of opinion. Therefore in his academy of research he followed the Socratic method of question and answer, and when it came to publishing the results of his investigations he did not set down conclusions reached, which were often meagre, but drew up on paper an imaginary discussion, not a verbatim report of a class-room meeting, though he may often have tried out certain lines of argument there. These imaginary discussions were put into the mouths of persons no longer alive and every effort was made to ensure that they spoke words in keeping with their general characteristics. In all except the latest dialogues Socrates is chief interlocutor. The whole is then set forth in one of the traditional ways of which Plato himself made many combinations and variations: (1) purely dramatic, *e.g. Gorgias*, *Meno*, the words of the dialogue are set down like the parts in a play; (2) entirely reported, *e.g. Republic* where Socrates reports the entire dialogue in which he himself took part; (3) narrated at second hand, *e.g. Symposium* in which Apollodorus, who was not present, reports what a third party said had taken place. Often however a dialogue begins by being purely dramatic, then one of the characters reports a dialogue to the rest, as Phædo describing Socrates' conversation in his last days. Sometimes the direct dramatic method, though dropped for a time, is brought back again, while the dialogue form itself, at any rate in the later works, is sometimes virtually abandoned. Now we can hardly be intended to believe every detail of the introductory story or that it was possible for a man to report a conversation of hundreds of pages, but we are intended to believe that the dialogue form was not a sham but a reality, at least to this extent that when Socrates asks question A, Thrasymachus or another will give answer B, that the argument is taking the course it does take because it must, not because Plato is directing it. Often, however, we are far from believing this, and would like to interpose a different answer. Yet Plato is perfectly logical; he pursues the argument whither it leads him and does not shrink from its conclusions. The argument is therefore often sidetracked and has to start again. Sometimes it changes its direction so completely that the speakers are not discussing the questions with which they began or even maintaining the position which they set out to defend. The result is that any statement about or summary of the contents of any dialogue is apt to be misleading. All this is of course true to life; Plato suppresses himself as far as is humanly possible and allows the argument to develop in a way which, if not inevitable, is at least likely and logical. Not that dramatic probability in itself was Plato's aim. He would be shocked to know that for one man who studies him in search of truth, there are five or six who read him for his artistic skill and mastery of words. He would not even have approved of the study of his dialogues as a text-book of philosophy, though every generation since his day has used them for that purpose. He did not write text-books of philosophy; he did not believe in them, they were no better than the set speeches of Protagoras. He speaks with contempt of those who try to make text-books and use him in doing so. If anyone were to write a text-book of philosophy, he, Plato, could do it best, but the subject was not one which lent itself to such treatment.[41] Only the dialogue form did he feel free to use.

In view of this it is not surprising that the attempts to trace an orderly growth of Plato's philosophy and to arrange the dialogues in chronological order on the basis of such a growth have resulted in the greatest divergence of opinion.[42] A greater measure of agreement has been reached by the use of the stylistic method, based on the relative frequency of the occurrence of a large number of words and expressions. It has become possible to distinguish Plato's earlier style from his later and to establish that the *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Philebus*, *Timæus*, *Critias* and *Laws* are the last six composed. To the early period, which may be tentatively defined as 396–388 B.C., belong *Apology*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Alcibiades* i., *Hippias* (two), *Protagoras*, *Gorgias* and *Meno*. Between these two groups come *Phædo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phædrus*, *Ion*, *Menexenus*, *Euthydemus*, *Cratylus*, *Parmenides*, and *Theaetetus*. The method has not enabled us to determine the order within the groups and its application is really only sure in determining which are the latest.[43] Hence the actual date at which any dialogue was completed is usually impossible to determine. Plato's allusions to contemporary events are naturally rare,[44] since his dialogues are imagined to take place long before, and it is not certain how the dialogues are to be fitted into the framework of his life given above. He probably began to write about 396 when he returned from the travels which followed upon Socrates' execution, and he may have completed the bulk of his early work before leaving for Sicily in 388. After the founding of the Academy in 389 there is a period of twenty years before his second Sicilian visit, and to this middle period belong the *Republic*, which may well have taken years to write, and certain dialogues which have not the marks either of his earliest or latest style. But the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* probably come nearer to the last six than to the others of the middle group. But all this is disputed. We receive no guidance from the arrangement of the dialogues in our manuscripts, an arrangement in groups of four (tetralogies) which goes back to the early Roman Empire. All Plato's known dialogues have been preserved and a number of doubtful genuineness, *Alcibiades* ii.,

---

[41] *Epist.*, vii. 341*c*. Actually he did himself make a text-book, later than this letter, but the *Laws* is a treatise on practical statecraft rather than pure philosophy.

[42] An extreme case is the *Parmenides*, which among 25 selected dialogues has been placed at the very beginning by some and by others as late as 22nd, to say nothing of many intermediate positions.

---

[43] At all times such a method is open to the objection that style is in some respects determined by the nature of the subject-matter.

[44] A few of his anachronisms are useful; *e.g.* in *Symp.*, 193 allusion is made to the dismemberment of Mantinea by the Spartans in 385.

Clitophon and *Epinomis*, an appendix to the *Laws*,[45] as well as several that are certainly spurious. Plato's *Epistles*, long suspected of being forgeries, have for the most part been vindicated. But the first is definitely spurious.

Early Group

Plato's dramatic powers are most in evidence in his earlier writings; in the latest the dialogue form is almost nullified or frankly abandoned and Socrates becomes more and more of a mouthpiece. In the early dialogues he is a living figure. When Plato returned to Athens in 396 he took part in the controversy then raging about the real Socrates, a controversy which is still in progress. Three of his earliest works were written to vindicate both his master and his friends. The *Defence* ('Απολογία) or *Apology* is of course not a dialogue but a speech, which, however, was never delivered by either Plato or Socrates. Plato puts it in the mouth of Socrates and makes him say not merely what he might have said to a jury in 399 but also what he thought it good for his enemies to hear in 396. But he introduces actual incidents of the trial and gives the whole an air of reality. Doubtless Socrates had made some such stand as the *Apology* says; people would still remember how Socrates had behaved and Plato's defence would have been worthless, if he had not imitated Socrates' manner and incorporated something of the actual trial. But the words are those of Plato, as the words of the Funeral Oration are those of Thucydides. And what perfect words they are, richness without verbosity, precision without bareness. Arraigned before accusers who include not merely the persons bringing the indictment, but all his many enemies, the comic poets who burlesqued him, the ignorant who confused him with Anaxagoras and thought him an atheist and a corrupter of the young, he points to his own life, his devotion to his duty to his country, to the difference between his modesty and the arrogant claims of the Sophists to know everything and to be able to impart it for sums of money. When the verdict is given against him and he suggests that as a penalty he should have the highest honour which the city could bestow, the dignity of the court is affronted by his levity and he is condemned to death. The final address to the jury of his fellow-citizens is one of the most memorable passages in Plato. The *Crito* is a defence of Socrates' friends who might have saved his life. Plato wishes to put on record that Socrates whole-heartedly accepted the laws of the State in which he lived, and, as he had been condemned to death in accordance with those laws, he would not listen to the suggestion of his friends who wished to smuggle him out of the country. So Socrates argues with Crito, concluding with an imaginary account of how the laws, if they had a voice, would insist on obedience as a fair return for the protection they afford. In the *Euthyphro* the discussion is supposed to take place before the trial. Euthyphro has found himself in a position where he deems it his duty to prosecute his own father. Such an unfilial act is in the Greek view impious and, as Socrates is about to be charged with impiety, a discussion ensues on the real nature and definition of piety. No conclusion is reached but the dialogue is interesting as containing germs of philosophical ideas elsewhere more fully worked out. The search for a definition of piety involves the study of other kinds of right-dealing and justice.

---

[45] A. E. Taylor, *Plato and the Authorship of the Epinomis*, Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 15., 1929, defends it.

Another trio, *Laches*, *Lysis* and *Charmides* may also be said to be in defence of Socrates. They depict him in conversation with young men. Far from corrupting them he encouraged them to discuss virtue, Courage in the *Laches*, Friendship in the *Lysis*, Self-control in the *Charmides*. Various definitions are put forward and certain popular fallacies exposed, but no definite conclusion is reached. Of the three the *Charmides* is perhaps the best example and most typical of Plato's early manner, both because Socrates' narrative is so vivid and playful and because the subject *σωφροσύνη* is one of great importance in Greek thought. Socrates had been enchanted by the beauty of the boy Charmides and wished to find out whether he had beauty of soul too. He had elicited some definitions of *sophrosyne*, among them the suggestion that it is "doing one's own job," τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν — an idea we meet again in the *Republic* as a definition of justice. Here it is agreed that this does not necessarily mean "doing everything for oneself," making one's own clothes and the like, since the man who makes shoes for another may still be "minding his own business." Suffice it here to notice that for Plato moral and social virtues are identical and that the discussion on self-control has developed on sociological lines. As the physician practises medicine, and medical science is the object of his knowledge, so the σώφρων practises self-control and the object of his knowledge is — what? No satisfactory answer is found, but the significant thing is that virtue is held to imply knowledge. Another early dialogue which defends Socrates on the charge of corrupting the young is *Alcibiades* i. in which the philosopher tells the youth how much he will have to learn before he will ever become a leader in the state: so too Æschines in his *Alcibiades*.

Plato found abundant material for his sketches in the characters of the great Sophists of the fifth century, many of whom Socrates had actually met and talked with. In the *Hippias Minor* we see the discomfiture of this master of every art, and in the *Hippias Maior* all his knowledge cannot help him to follow a simple lesson in logic and definition, and he is unable to define anything save by giving examples of it. A greater masterpiece is the *Protagoras* in which Prodicus and Hippias appear as well as Protagoras and Socrates. In this dialogue Plato's dramatic ability and his power of thought are both equally conspicuous. Throughout the most subtle parts of the argument and the longest speeches we never entirely lose sight of the scene in the house of Callias or feel that the conversation is unreal, as we do in some of the later dialogues. Only the first three books of the *Republic* can compare with the *Protagoras* for this happy combination of drama and philosophy. Socrates is dragged out of bed by an enthusiastic friend who says that Protagoras is come to Athens and Socrates must come at once to hear him. Socrates refuses to become excited and merely asks why. Still he agrees to accompany his young friend and to ask Protagoras himself what good his teaching will do. Protagoras is not so harshly satirized by Plato as Hippias. He is represented as an intelligent and honest man who is endeavouring to improve the education of the citizens but has no very clear idea of his aims. He is not greatly interested in Socrates' questions about the nature of the excellence or virtue which Protagoras professes to teach nor in his search for unity among the diverse virtues. Socrates in turn becomes impatient of Protagoras' long speeches which do not give him a chance to ask questions. So the discussion might have come to an end, but for the entreaties of the company, Hippias, Alcibiades and Prodicus, by whom Socrates is induced to stay and Protagoras to begin by putting questions. Now Protagoras like many of the Sophists had studied literature and he now cites an apparent contradiction in a poem of Simonides. Socrates was as little interested in literary criticism as Protagoras in dialectic; he soon tires of the poem and brings the discussion back to the teaching of excellence. He finally gets Protagoras to admit that the good is also the pleasant and that in teaching excellence the Sophist is only teaching people to pursue pleasure. The argument is most ingeniously worked out and the *Protagoras* is one of Plato's cleverest attempts to dissociate his master from the aims and methods of the Sophists while making him pretend to agree with them.

Of the great rhetorician Gorgias Plato gives a more shadowy picture. He does not reproduce or parody his style, but treats him leniently and depicts him as being quite as intelligent as Protagoras and much more amiable. But Gorgias is already tired after giving a lecture when Socrates and Chærephon arrive and in a great deal of the discussion he takes no part. At the beginning he willingly tells, in answer to Socrates' question, what are the uses of rhetoric; but his disciple Polus makes more extravagant claims and in the debate which ensues Socrates makes short work of him. He leads the unsuspecting Polus to the admission that rhetoric is really only useful for a man who wishes to do wrong, but no man wishes to do wrong, he would rather suffer it. Callicles, another disciple of Gorgias, steps in to ask Socrates if he is really serious in this. Socrates naturally refuses to explain his jokes, but he has now enunciated a principle in ethics that no man does wrong willingly and Callicles, if he is to show that rhetoric has uses, must dispute it. So, like Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, Callicles puts the case for *Might is Right* and this becomes the subject of more than half the dialogue. Near the end Callicles advises Socrates not to run the risk of becoming unpopular, and Socrates in an imagined prophecy foretells that he will be accused and that his trial by the Athenians will be like a jury of small boys giving a verdict in favour of a confectioner who gave them sweets and condemning the doctor who gave them medicine. He then tells a story or myth, as he often does, about a future life after death in which a philosopher will have nothing to fear. It is a many-sided dialogue showing Plato at his most versatile and Socrates in his best gadfly mood. In the *Meno* we again find Socrates discussing whether virtue can be taught and where teachers may be found. In maintaining that virtue is knowledge (cp. *Charmides*) Socrates is led to enquire into the nature of knowledge and makes the famous suggestion that knowledge is recollection; our souls existed before we were born and education and instruction consist in awakening the soul to its dormant knowledge.

Second Group

Of the dialogues of Plato's middle life none is more renowned than the *Phædo*. Here he goes back again to the last days of his master's life, to the very day when he drank the hemlock. He himself was not present, being ill, as we are told by Phædo in the only mention of Plato's name in the dialogues, though it is twice mentioned in the *Apology*. The events of the day are related by Phædo to Echecrates. Besides Phædo there were with Socrates in the prison Crito, Æschines and Antisthenes, Eucleides of Megara, Simmias and Cebes of Thebes and several other close friends of Socrates. His wife Xanthippe and their child were there at first but, like a true Athenian, Socrates had them taken home that the men might talk. The conversation turns naturally on death which Socrates holds to have no terror for the true philosopher. Nor is he perturbed by the gruesome message from the executioner (63*d*) which Plato introduces to remind us that Socrates was making these brave statements within a few hours of his death. The discussion turns next to life after death, and Socrates adduces various reasons for believing the human soul to be immortal: the doctrine of knowledge as recollection implies a previous and therefore independent existence of our souls: our knowledge of the abstract and eternal can only be due to a soul which is itself eternal: the body, so the Pythagoreans said, is but a tomb from which the soul escapes at death. He tells another "myth" about souls in after-life. The final scene, the grief of his friends, the good humour of Socrates, joking till the end, the kind-hearted gaoler, the gradual numbness and death of the old man, his dying words, all this is unforgettable and is told with that Hellenic restraint of which Plato, so un-Greek in many ways, is as perfect a master as Sophocles.

While the *Phædo* comes nearest to our hearts and the *Protagoras* is a work of perfect dramatic art, yet Plato's greatest achievement is the *Republic* or the *State* (πολιτεία). If we had to lose all Plato's works save one, we should ask to keep this one. Some would ask for it because in the heart of it Plato reaches heights of metaphysical speculation, others for the vividness of the opening books, others again for his views on art or for the wealth of educational and political ideas, many because it is one of the most important works in all philosophical literature, its influence extending far outside the field of Platonism proper, ancient and modern; but all would agree that in the *Republic* Plato touches his greatest, most universal and most varied excellence. It is a long work, the longest except the *Laws*, and the composition of its ten books was probably spread over a number of years, and some of the ideas put forward had, as we have seen,[46] been in the air as early as 391 B.C. The subject of the whole might be said to be "The Ideal State" or "Justice: its nature and operation," but that would be inadequate and misleading; the *Republic* is a dialogue, not a treatise, and if it moves from ethics to mathematics, from metaphysics to education and leaves loose threads here and there, we must not judge it by wrong standards or apply to the dialogue rules which are applicable only to the text-book.

It is not possible to give more than a brief idea of the wealth that is to found in this book. The chief characters are Thrasymachus the Sophist of Chalcedon,[47] the blustering defender of injustice, who like Polus in the *Gorgias* is finally reduced to silence by the relentless, but always good-humoured Socrates; Lysias the orator is present and his brother Polemarchus and their father Cephalus, who is host. But most of the dialogue is between Socrates and Plato's two elder brothers, Adimantus, serious, shrewd and practical, and Glaucon, a good debater with a lively wit. Out of the preliminary discussion of justice and injustice there arises a challenge to Socrates to show (ii. 368) that justice is something good in itself not something disagreeable but necessary. He proceeds to examine justice in a simple community, where its workings may be more clearly observed than in individuals. He does not examine an existing state but makes a synthesis, purely logical not historical, of a city with its necessary component parts, laying particular emphasis on the education of citizens; the works of Homer and other poets, so much used in Greek education, are found to contain much that is undesirable; the effect of literature on character is all that counts, and as all art, literature, painting, music, is imitation, only imitation of the good can be allowed. So too in physical training, a good body does not make a good character but good character can make a good body. Rulers, defenders and subjects will all have their appropriate training for their several stations and it is suggested that in a State justice is perhaps the interaction of these groups, each doing its own work — *τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν.*[48] Applying this to individuals (iv. 427 ff.) Plato gives us a first lesson in psychology; the individual, like the state, is complex and may act, or refrain from acting, for various motives, according to the mastery of the various parts of the soul. Between the sexes there is no essential difference in soul or character, and women, if they are suitable, will be trained to govern, to become rulers. The ruling class must be freed from all necessity to earn money; they should have all they need, but there is to be no individual ownership, all property even wives and children being held in common. There must however be no promiscuity; unions are to be arranged on a eugenic basis. The children of the rulers are sent to a State-controlled *crêche* as soon as born and their mothers may not know which is their own child.

---

[46] P. 293.

[47] See p. 182.

To the question whether such a state could ever be realized in practice Socrates replies that the first essential would be a ruler who was also a philosopher.[49] This leads (v. 471 ff.) to a search for a definition of a philosopher and of the object of his knowledge and a distinction is drawn between knowledge and opinion. The education of a true philosopher must be based on the contemplation of the Good, not good things, but the Form or Idea of the Good, which exists only in the intellectual world of ideas, which is the real world, not in the sensible world of things which our eyes see. Books viii. and ix. are a kind of negative verification of what has preceded, contrasting the ideal commonwealth with the imperfect forms of state in the visible world, and the philosophic with the non-philosophic man. The tenth book is a kind of epilogue to the whole; it contains one of Plato's best "myths," an imaginary picture of the rewards of a just man in a future life, and it resumes the discussion on art from Books ii. and iii. There Plato's objections to poetry were in the main ethical, like those of Xenophanes [50] and the criticisms of Euripides in Aristophanes [51]; poetry could only be tolerated if censored. Plato now raises metaphysical objections, which arise out of Books vi. and vii., and which apply to all forms of art. As visible objects and acts of life are not reality but only copies of the ideas of the intellectual world, so works of art are only copies of our visible life and are therefore still further removed from absolute truth. To object to literature, sculpture and painting on such grounds may seem ridiculous, but if we grant Plato's premiss that all art is imitation, the conclusion follows, and Plato does not shrink from it, however unpalatable [52] it may have been to one of the world's greatest artists in words. For Plato knew himself to be an artist and a careful student of forms of expression. In the *Phædrus* the art is discussed and the conclusion reached that in literature and rhetoric mere technical skill is insufficient; a poet must have divine madness or inspiration. There is the same notion in the *Ion* where the rhapsode is satirized as a mere copyist and reproducer. Here Plato finds a further objection which is both metaphysical and moral. A poet in a divine frenzy has no σωφροσύνη, he is unreliable. He has no *knowledge* only *opinion*. Opinion must be tested by the philosophical method of dialectic, but you cannot question a poet, therefore poems, like set speeches, are philosophically valueless.[53]

---

[48] Cp. above, *Charmides.*

[49] On Plato's unhappy attempt to make a philosopher-ruler see above, p. 318.

In the *Symposium* (Banquet) Plato gives us something quite new, something unsurpassed in literature for sheer brilliance of conception and execution. What took place at the banquet at Agathon's house had been told by one of the guests to a certain Apollodorus who now relates "as much as he can remember"; hence the entire conversation is indirectly reported. At the beginning we have not a dialogue in the ordinary sense, but a series of short speeches in praise of Eros (Love) with interludes. Among the speakers were Aristophanes the comic poet and Agathon the tragedian, their host. The speeches differ not only in the account given of the nature of Eros, but in the actual style. Thus Agathon speaks with many of the rhetorical artifices of Gorgias, Aristophanes in a much plainer manner. We do not know what justification Plato had for ascribing either style or matter to the speaker concerned, but as usual he endeavoured to give a not improbable picture. So far as can be judged he succeeded in putting quite a likely speech into the mouth of Aristophanes; for the fantastic physiology, the explanation of the sexes as a cutting in two of an original spherical creature with double functions, might well have been conceived by the great comic poet himself. When Socrates' turn comes, he pretends that he heard what he is going to say from a prophetess Diotima: that Eros is not an extreme but a mean, that its object is not either of the sexes but wisdom. At this point Alcibiades appears. He is drunk and delivers an encomium not of Eros but of Socrates, whom he compares to Silenus or a satyr, not only in appearance but in character. He cleverly maintains this thesis, using it to prove that Socrates, for all his love of young men, is not erotic in the ordinary sense. This caused great amusement. Some of the guests then departed. The narrator fell asleep. When he awoke Agathon, Aristophanes and Socrates were still awake and sober and were discussing the writing of plays. Soon Socrates was the only one who had not fallen asleep and as it was now morning he got up and went about his usual business.

---

[50] See above, p. 172.

[51] See above, p. 291.

[52] *Rep.*, 595b.

[53] See further E. E. Sikes, *The Greek View of Poetry*, chap. iii.

The verbal gymnastics of the *Euthydemus* are amusing, and Socrates thoroughly enjoys the game of which he is himself a master. But at one point Crito remarks that a certain unnamed teacher of rhetoric, partly a philosopher and partly a statesman, looks with disfavour and contempt on what Bacon calls mere "contending for words." The description of the absent critic suggests that Plato had in mind Isocrates but, as he could only have been a boy at the time when the dialogue is supposed to have taken place, Plato avoids the anachronism by not mentioning his name. The making of speeches is discussed in the *Menexenus* but here Plato, as if to show that he was as good as the orators at their own game, puts into the mouth of Socrates a patriotic speech supposed to have been written by Aspasia. The study of etymology had been founded by the earlier Sophists and in the *Cratylus* Plato tries it himself in a characteristic manner. He does not really take it seriously, and his fantastic etymologies look like parody of the Sophists. But as a philosopher he is vitally interested in the relation of words to their meanings, and he exposes certain logical fallacies.

The Metaphysical Dialogues and the Third Group

The *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus*, the two remaining dialogues of the middle group, may be classed along with the *Sophist* and *Politicus* of the third group as forming a quartette of highly metaphysical dialogues. They are of more importance in philosophy than in literature, but the *Parmenides*, which has given rise to endless controversy ever since the Neoplatonists used it as a book of oracles and mysticism, has very great dramatic power reminiscent of the earlier dialogues. It depicts Parmenides, Zeno and Socrates discussing the Theory of Forms. The criticism is so destructive that some have considered that Plato could not have written it. It is rather the finest example of the power of dialectic and of Plato's belief in the necessity of subjecting everything to its rigorous tests. In the *Philebus* the nature of the good is discussed by Socrates and two others but there is no scene and nothing to make us interested in the characters of the speakers. The *Timæus*, with its fragmentary sequel the *Critias*, like the *Parmenides* was a favourite of the Neoplatonists perhaps owing to the *cupido ingenii humani libentius obscura credendi.*[54] It is a cosmological myth in prose, not very dissimilar to the early crudities (see p. 74). The last and longest of Plato's works is the *Laws* in twelve books with the *Epinomis* as a kind of thirteenth. It is a work of great importance in political philosophy and is more practical than the *Republic.* Plato is here making not a logically perfect city but an actual constitution. Thus, while in the *Republic* (viii.) various types of state were merely glanced at to point a contrast, in the *Laws* (iii.) he examines in the manner of a modern text-book the constitution of actual states, Troy, Athens, Sparta and so forth.

---

[54] Tacitus, *Hist.*, i. 22.

The beautiful, half-poetical prose of Plato has won many students for philosophy, and Plato intended that it should do so. He was very much alive to the importance of human speech, and while he feared the power of rhetoric, just as he feared the power of poetry, in unscrupulous hands, he was anxious to secure its aid in the service of philosophy. His attacks on the rhetoricians are therefore tempered as in the *Phædrus* by a plea for a better use of rhetoric. The *Apology* was a practical example of the uses to which an orator's skill ought to be put; it rigorously excluded the cringing appeal to the judges' feelings, which other speakers deliberately cultivated, in order to make the speech worthy of a philosopher. Plato knew the methods of the rhetoricians and studied them carefully, and this not unnaturally left some traces in his style.[55] But his attitude was always highly critical and his objections, as we should expect, mainly moral. It is not the figures of speech in themselves that he objects to, but all around him he saw the artifices of prose being put to uses which he considered immoral. To the users of these artifices we now turn.

The Attic Orators: Retrospect to the Fifth Century

The ten authors whom Alexandrian critics included in the canon of Attic Orators are Antiphon, Andocides, Lysias, Isocrates and Isæus in the first group, Æschines, Demosthenes, Lycurgus, Hypereides and Deinarchus in the second group. The use of the term Orator is misleading and it might be better to call them the ten masters of Attic prose style, but it would then seem strange that such an artist as Plato should not be included. To understand this apparent anomaly we must look back to the fifth-century Sophists (see Part III). The intellectual awakening in Athens continued to bear fruit in various ways; indeed the Sophists who, like Protagoras, set themselves the task of raising the intellectual level of the people were by no means unsuccessful; but for the Sophists we should have had no Plato. But that part of the sophistic movement which had the greatest influence on literature was the teaching of rhetoric, the very part which Plato, not without cause, most distrusted. We saw in Part III that in addition to the shadowy Sicilians, Corax and Tisias, the art of rhetoric was both used with effect and taught with success by Gorgias of Leontini and Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, two aliens at Athens. The ten writers with whom we shall now deal were to a greater or less degree the product of this rhetorical teaching, while Plato, in spite of occasional echoes which he could hardly avoid, definitely was not. At this point, as often before in this book, we must begin by ridding ourselves of certain misconceptions which are likely to arise out of the modern uses of words. The art of rhetoric does not mean simply the art of making speeches; it embraces the whole field of prose and much of verse too. It was the art, as the Romans said, of *eloquentia.* Literature, whether prose or verse, was intended to be heard, not mutely read; just as verse was sung or recited so prose was delivered orally. Again, and this is the important point, just as verse developed a traditional technique which found its most perfect form in the Epics of Homer and in the Odes of Pindar, so too in prose the Greek love of form and symmetry soon led to the establishment of a tradition in prose style, no less elaborate, which found its most perfect form in the writings of Isocrates. The rules, or rather the technique, of style did not apply equally to all prose writings any more than, for example, the rules of choral lyric to monodic. They were applied particularly to works intended to carry conviction or, as the Greeks said, Persuasion (πειθώ). Hence historical narrative was much less affected than speeches — a fact strikingly illustrated in the work of Thucydides.[56] It is therefore natural, even if chronologically inconvenient, that those writers whose works aimed at presenting a case convincingly should be classed together as the chief exponents of artistic prose.

---

[55] That is, of course, apart from deliberate imitations, such as we saw in the *Symposium*. For details see E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa,* i., pp. 106 ff.

The first mark of this artistic prose is, as we have seen, the constant employment of the various figures of speech.[57] The second is the importation of poetical words, a trick especially favoured by Gorgias. The third is the rhythmical balance of clauses and even phrases, of which the best early exponent was Thrasymachus, and which was destined to affect the whole history of ancient and medieval prose in Greek and Latin. The ten Attic Orators all employed these to a greater or less degree and this is the bond between them, not any contemporaneousness or declamatory power. Antiphon the expounder of legal methods, Andocides the politician, Isocrates the political philosopher, Demosthenes the patriot-statesman are therefore grouped together by a tradition in literary history which will be useful enough if we do not forget what it implies.

Now for Gorgias and his followers, but not for Antiphon, the use of artistic prose was in itself part of the method of carrying conviction. The beauty of form and the rhythm of balanced clauses charmed the ear of the music-loving Greek, while the sudden flash of the unwonted word or the striking metaphor pleased and excited him, just as Pindar had done to an earlier generation, until he scarcely knew or cared whether the facts were true. An orator of the school of Gorgias did not need knowledge of a subject but only knowledge of a craft, in particular the knack of hitting the right note at the right time (*καιρός*). He must learn to say not what is true, and perhaps unpalatable, but only *τὸν προσήκοντα λόγον*. We need hardly remind readers that Plato saw and feared the danger to morality in all this, but not all the Sophists and certainly not all the orators were unscrupulous. At the same time it was obvious that these methods could be used to present either a good case or a bad one; the essential was to win.[58] Morality was irrelevant. Rhetorical prose however was not only a means of winning a case or carrying conviction. It was an artistic end in itself. The more formally perfect, the more rhetorically brilliant prose became, the nearer it came to poetry — a striking difference between ancient literature and modern. Both the poetic diction of Gorgias and the rhythms of Thrasymachus appealed to the same feelings as the highly-coloured epithets in Æschylus and the metrical correspondence of lyric poetry. Indeed in the fourth century artistic prose played to a large extent the part of poetry in its appeal to the æsthetic sense. Euripides had made poetry more like prose; the Sophists had made prose more like poetry. The Athenians listened eagerly, for their poetry was all but dead, but Plato shook his head, for art and morality were farther separated than ever.

---

[56] That the difference is far less evident in Xenophon's speeches is to be explained by the fact that he was so little at Athens.

[57] See above, p. 181.

Antiphon

A survey of the Attic Orators covers a period of about a hundred years and Antiphon, the first of them, belongs to the fifth century. He was a little older than Thucydides and his style at many points bears resemblance to the speeches of the historian.[59] He may, in fact, have been born as early as 480, and he must certainly have been well known before Gorgias came to Athens in 427. However, we know little of him before 411 when he was one of the promoters of the revolution of the Four Hundred. This we learn from Thucydides (viii. 68) who speaks in the highest terms of his general ability and his powers as a speaker; indeed his very cleverness made him suspect. He goes on to tell us how Antiphon, brought to trial after the fall of the Four Hundred, made one of the finest speeches ever known to have been made by a man in his own defence. He was, however, condemned for treason and executed. Antiphon, like Thucydides, is one of the pioneers in language. He was a precursor rather than an exponent of artistic prose. This is what we should expect in view of his date. To a certain extent he came under the influence of Gorgias and even Thrasymachus, but neither poetic diction nor rhythmical correspondence are very strongly marked features of his style. He did, however, like Thucydides, make great use of the figures of speech especially antithesis.[60] Ancient rhetoricians called his style "rugged" (*αὐστηρὰ ἁρμονία*) as opposed to the smooth (*γλαφυρά*) diction of Isocrates, but the significant thing about Antiphon's style is that it is not one but many. The influence of the Sophists is there but it is only partial. This will be clearer when we examine his writings.

---

[58] At law it was something of a disgrace to lose a case whether for oneself or a client, and even Socrates, according to Plato's *Apology*, insisted that his failure was due not to ἀπορία λόγων but to his refusal to grovel.

[59] One small example: the curious use of the participle in phrases like τὸ θυμούμενον τῆς γνώμης, Tetr., ii. γ. 3. Cp. Thuc., ii. 59, τὸ ὀργιζόμενον τῆς γνώμης.

We have of Antiphon samples of two kinds of work, one theoretical and instructional, the other practical. There are first the *Tetralogies*, four in number; these are sets of four short speeches designed to illustrate how a case for or against might be presented. The cases are imaginary and the bare facts are usually taken as admitted by both sides. Thus a boy employed in picking up arrows was killed by one of the men practising on the range. The father of the boy brings an action for homicide and a method of proof set forth; the defence may argue that it was the boy's fault, that he accidentally killed himself and that an action for homicide does not lie. There are always two speeches on either side, making a tetralogy. The arguments used by Antiphon are mostly those based on *εἰκός*, probability. One side seeks to prove that it was unlikely from the nature of things that A should have committed the crime or alternatively that A, since he knew that probability was against him, would refrain from the deed; the other side argues the opposite. This opposition of likely and unlikely is a commonplace of the Sophists and as a method of legal argument it was developed by Corax and Tisias. Thus in the matter of method Antiphon is a follower of the old Sicilian school rather than the Gorgian. He relies for his effects not so much on the appeal to the ear as on a sober and reasonable presentation. In the tetralogies we have the old-fashioned technique which was largely superseded in fourth-century oratory. In both method and style Antiphon belongs partly to the pre-Gorgian era.

---

[60] See above, p. 200.

The three extant speeches composed for actual cases are *On the Murder of Herodes*, *On the Choreutes* and *Against a Stepmother* on a charge of poisoning. In his conduct of real cases [61] Antiphon follows much the same method as in the *Tetralogies*, the method of reasonableness and probability. But in the matter of style we are struck first by certain passages showing quite strongly the effects of Gorgias and Thrasymachus. The exordium to the *Herodes* is a piece of carefully prepared rhythmical prose; but in other places, especially where he is merely narrating, we have the older and plainer prose again. The two are not yet blended. The second point is that words, forms and expressions which were freely used in the tetralogies are avoided in the speeches.[62] This curious fact has been wrongly supposed to indicate that the *Tetralogies* are not by Antiphon but by an imitator. But, if we may argue in the Tisias-Antiphon manner, the probability is that no imitator would ever think of using the non-Attic forms which Antiphon avoids in the speeches. The reason for their avoidance is clear enough; he would not wish to put them into the mouth of clients who had to speak before a critical Athenian audience. But the question why he used them in the *Tetralogies* is more difficult. Some of them may be explained as part of the old literary tradition in the prose style of Thucydides or of the scientific work of Hippocrates; and they are therefore not out of place in the *Tetralogies.* But others can only be explained as neologisms, which Antiphon was deliberately trying out in his private work but to which his clients would take exception.

---

[61] The client bought his speech and delivered it himself.

[62] *e.g.* in the *Tetralogies* the aorist of ἀπολογεῖσθαι is ἀπελογήθην, but in the speeches he uses ἀπελογησάμην, which is the usual Attic form. See H. Richards in *Class. Rev.*, xx., p. 148 and J. H. Thiel, *Antiphons erste Tetralogie*, pp. 9 ff.

Andocides

Andocides is a contrast to Antiphon in one respect. There is nothing academic about him. He was not interested in the theory of oratory, and the bookish rhetoricians of late antiquity did not think highly of him as a stylist; but he was a fluent and successful speaker and his speeches are interesting just for that reason. There is none of the restraint of Antiphon; he attacks his opponents often with abuse. He was not, like Antiphon and Lysias, a professional speech-writer, and two of his three extant speeches are in his own defence; the third *On the Peace* (390) is political. In 415, when Andocides would be about twenty-five years old, he had given information about the mutilation of the Hermæ.[63] He claimed informer's indemnity but he was held to be subject to a decree excluding from temples and market-place all who had committed any impiety. His speech *On His Return* (*c.* 411) is a plea for restitution of his civic rights. The appeal failed but he returned to Athens under the general amnesty of 403. His attendance at the mysteries again raised the question whether he had been guilty of impiety in 415, and his most famous speech *On the Mysteries* (399) is really an attempt to prove that he had taken no part in the mutilation of the Hermæ and was not therefore subject to the decree against those convicted of impiety. He won his case. The main interest of the speech is historical; it throws much light on the year 415. Andocides is at his best in narrative; he tells his story well and plausibly, and if he made use of the figures of speech, except of course antithesis, he employed effectively what the rhetoricians called the figures of thought: — indignant and rhetorical questions, sudden stoppages, personal appeals, such as

---

[63] See above, p. 201 ff.

> I would ask you gentlemen to look at the matter humanly, and say how each one of you would have acted in my position

and dilemmas. "There are only two courses open to you," he says in the *De Pace*, "either you join with the Argives in war against the Lacedæmonians or you join with the Bœotians and make a common peace." He died some time after 390.

Lysias

Lysias was the son of Cephalus, a Syracusan who had settled in Athens in the time of Pericles. Lysias was born there but never became an Athenian citizen. The date of his birth is unknown; it was probably between 460 and 435. He lived for some time at Thurii with his two brothers but returned to Athens after the Sicilian disaster. From 412 to 404 they were managing at Athens a successful shield-factory and moving in cultivated circles. Along with other rich foreigners resident in the city the three brothers excited the jealousy and cupidity of the Thirty. Polemarchus was executed. Lysias escaped and after the fall of the Thirty returned to Athens, where he continued to live and work as a speech-writer till his death some time after 380.

The prose of Lysias has been justly praised for its grace and purity. In his clear and straightforward narrative he is not unlike Xenophon, but in argument and legal proof, though not less clear, his style is more formal and more ornamental and, when the occasion demanded it (see below), his rhetoric was unsurpassed. He was a writer of great versatility who studied his clients and tried to suit the speeches with which he provided them not only to their special needs but even to their characters. Moreover some of his clients, who were very numerous, may have had ideas of their own about the kind of speech they wanted. Be that as it may, Lysias' style is far from homogeneous and though for the most part he had pruned himself of the excesses of Gorgias, yet he could write "I mourn unbattled and unseabattled destruction of the

Hellenes." [64] In method too there is very little of Gorgias. Like Antiphon he preferred the school of Tisias. Plato [65] makes Phædrus read aloud to Socrates a speech "For and against being a lover" which purports to be by Lysias. We do not know whether the words are those of Lysias or of Plato but, if it is genuine work of the orator, it looks like the same class of composition as Antiphon's *Tetralogies*, a show piece; and even if Plato was only trying to do a piece after the manner of Lysias, still this *Eroticus* shows that Lysias was known to be an exponent of the εἰκὸς method.[66] Appeals to reasonable probability are common too in his actual speeches, *e.g.:*

> It is not likely that those who are poor and unfavourably placed should be guilty of insolent conduct, but those who have more of the world's goods than they need, not those who are physically weak, but those who are confident of their own strength.
>
> (*On the Cripple*, No. 24, § 15.)

But in Lysias reasonableness is more than part of a forensic technique; it is characteristic of the man himself. There is little oratorical fire, even in a speech like the *Against Eratosthenes*, in which he speaks on matters closely concerning himself. The quiet good humour with which he looks at everything is just as much part of his charm as the graceful language in which he expresses it.

The variety in the style of Lysias is largely due to the number of different kinds of speeches which he wrote for himself or for others. Of a total of over two hundred we have extant thirty-four, some of them only preserved incompletely by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and some papyrus fragments. We have (1) *Orations for Formal Occasions*, epideictic speeches. Of these the best is the *Olympiacus* (No. 33) which is extant in part. The occasion was the Olympic festival of 388, to which Dionysius I of Syracuse sent a magnificent and wealthy contingent. The misgivings caused by the tyrant's display of power found expression in this speech of Lysias, who in highly antithetic and artificial prose seizes the opportunity of the great Panhellenic festival to tell the assembled Greeks, especially the Lacedæmonians, that they must stand together not only against the barbarian Persian but against the Greek despot of Sicily. To the same class belongs the *Epitaphius*, a dull oration on fallen Athenians. Lysias, not being an Athenian citizen, could not have been chosen to deliver it and it is doubtful whether he wrote it at all. (2) *Speeches for the Ecclesia.* We have only a fragment, spoken by someone unknown, in 403 "Against the abolition of the ancestral constitution of Athens" — a proposed alteration in the democratic constitution as restored in 403. Much less artificial are (3) *Speeches in Public Cases* which contain Lysias' best work. Sometimes he appears as a kind of Public Prosecutor; a good example is the speech *Against the Corn-dealers* on a charge of illegal profit-making. But often his speeches deal not with lawsuits in the ordinary sense but either with a scrutiny (δοκιμασία) of a claim or with a εὔθυνα, that curious Attic custom whereby an outgoing official was required to give an account of his stewardship before the Council of the Five Hundred (Boule). This was no mere formality but a rigorous trial and it was a common practice to engage the services of a professional speech-writer. Lysias was frequently called upon in both these kinds of cases. For example a certain Mantitheus (*Or.* 16) had to pass a scrutiny before he could be admitted a member of the Council; another, a cripple, had to make good his title to the pension which the State allowed to those unable to work (*Or.* 24). The speech, *Against Eratosthenes* (*Or.* 12, 403 B.C.), though it looks at first sight like an ordinary indictment for murder, is in reality a speech in the εὔθυνα to which Eratosthenes, one of the Thirty, voluntarily submitted in the hope of regaining favour with the restored democracy. This is one of Lysias' finest speeches. During his term of office as one of the Thirty

---

[64] Ἑλλήνων κλαίω ἀμάχητον καὶ ἀναυμάχητον ὄλεθρον. Such language only occurs in the fragments of a single speech, which, however, is not on that account to be declared spurious. A trained orator could and did use many styles.

[65] *Phædrus*, 230e–234.

[66] See Plato's criticisms of the method in the *Phædrus*.

Eratosthenes had arrested Lysias' brother Polemarchus who was afterwards executed. Lysias comes forward himself at the examination and argues that both the execution of Polemarchus and the conduct generally of Eratosthenes as a member of the Thirty make him worthy not of rehabilitation but of death. Thus we have not only an interesting personal record of the experiences of Lysias and his brother, but valuable light on the history of Athens in 404 and 403. Also valuable as history is a murder action *Against Agoratus* (*Or.* 13). There are speeches for defence or prosecution in cases of sacrilege (5 and 7), malicious wounding or murder (1, 3 and 4), evasion of military service (14 and 15), which throw light on many details of Athenian life. These were all crimes against the State, but we have also (4) a few of Lysias' *Speeches in Private Cases* such as slander (10). Fragments of three of the lost speeches were discovered in the papyrus finds at Oxyrhynchus.[67] Of these the most interesting is the speech "In defence against Hippotherses on behalf of the maidservant." We do not know who the maidservant was but it is evident from the three columns of papyrus which have been best preserved that the real defendant in the case was Lysias himself, and that the possession of his and his brother's property, which had been confiscated and sold by the Thirty, was the point at issue:

> Lysias escaped by flight but they killed his brother Polemarchus and took away his property. While he was away at the Piræus, he claimed to get it back on his return, but now when he has come back, he is unable to recover what is his own even by paying the price to the purchasers.[68]

Another is against Theomnestus, evidently a different Theomnestus from the person in the slander case of the extant speech No. 10. He had borrowed money from Lysias and failed to pay it back. The speech is another good example of the use made by Lysias of the πῶς εἰκός ἐστι method of argument.

---

[67] The *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, No. 1606, vol. 13, 1919.

[68] Fr. 6, trans. Grenfell and Hunt, l. c.

Isaeus

Little is known of the life of Isæus; even Dionysius of Halicarnassus could give no dates for his birth or his death. Like Lysias he was not an Athenian but a μέτοικος and, therefore, not a political but a forensic speech-writer. His activity falls between the years 390 and 344 but his speeches give us little guidance as to dates and little information about himself, since they were all written for clients and for cases in which he himself was not concerned. Of some fifty speeches ten and a half have survived and Dionysius has preserved a long fragment of a twelfth. The eleven all deal with cases about wills and estates, and though the lost speeches dealt with other kinds, it was on his skill in handling testamentary cases that the fame of Isæus chiefly rested. Where there was no professional judicature or official repository of legal knowledge, an orator, who, like Isæus, made himself familiar with every aspect of testamentary litigation was in a very strong position. The speeches of Isæus were therefore in great demand; indeed it was said of him that he was so good at putting a bad case that to have him as advocate almost aroused suspicion. In some speeches (1, 4 and 9) he is contesting a will in which the testator had left his property away from his nearest relatives. This he had a right to do but prejudice at Athens was very strong in favour of the next of kin and Isæus shows great skill in playing on this prejudice. In the *Pyrrhus* (3) there is no will and Isæus' speech defends the next of kin against others who had set up a claim of closer relationship. Here Isæus makes great use of the εἰκὸς method. Abuse of opponents is not uncommon, *e.g.* No. 5. It was easy to represent them as despoilers of the poor and innocent who were only asking for their legal due. In style as well as in method he is closer to Lysias than to Isocrates, but in one respect, avoidance of hiatus, he shows the influence of the Isocratean school of which he may have been one of the earliest pupils (see below). He was also a teacher, and owes part of his fame to the fact that he taught Demosthenes. But he differs from

Lysias in the studied care with which he arranged the parts of his speeches. He was a lawyer to his finger-tips, using every possible circumstance which might tell in his client's favour, but he does not, like Lysias, vary the character of his speech to suit the character of his client, however much he may vary his arrangement to suit the needs of the case.

Isocrates

Isocrates, the greatest master of artistic prose, was born in 436 and died in 338. Thus he was born nine years before the death of Pericles and lived long enough to see the victory of Philip of Macedon at Chæronea. In him, with Xenophon, Plato and Demosthenes, we may best observe what the Fourth Century stands for in Greek literature. His parents were well-to-do and his education lacked nothing. He studied rhetoric under Gorgias and Tisias and was especially influenced by the former. Philosophy he studied under Prodicus, but he was also affected by the teaching and methods of Socrates. In his youth he was marked out as a young man with a future [69] but his tastes lay more towards oratory than philosophy, or rather, more towards practical than speculative philosophy. He began his career as a writer of speeches for the law-courts — the six forensic speeches belong to the years 402–393 — but abandoned this profession and in after-life did not care to look back at it. His interests at this period lay in the theory and practice of oratory and about 392 he started a school, at first apparently at Chios, but within two years he moved it to Athens. Here he undertook to teach any man of natural aptitude and ability the art not only of oratory but of conduct, to give in fact such an education as should enable him to get the best out of life. The fees charged were not excessive [70] and in spite of opposition [71] the school was very successful especially after 380, the date of the *Panegyricus*. Among its famous *alumni* were Nicocles of Cyprus, Theopompus and Ephorus the historians, Isæus, Æschines, Lycurgus, and Hypereides. As Cicero[72] says they came pouring forth as out of the Trojan Horse. But education was not his life's work; the weapon of artistic prose which he had fashioned he now employed in the slow and careful composition of nine letters and fifteen other works: these we call speeches, but he did not deliver them[73]; he published them as pamphlets or broadsheets. It is on these fifteen discourses that the reputation of Isocrates stands or falls.

---

[69] Plato, *Phædrus*, *fin.*

[70] 1000 drachmæ. This is less than many of the fifth-century Sophists. People could not now afford so much. I. himself had lost most of his property in the war.

[71] His methods were attacked by a contemporary rhetorician Alcidamas in his work entitled *Against Sophists.*

About no Greek writer have such widely divergent views been held. "A thoroughly bad, wretched writer, without spirit or ideas" was the verdict of the historian Niebuhr. Others, while not denying him some originality, condemned him as an unpractical idealist with no political judgment. Against this attitude there was the inevitable reaction, and he has been largely rehabilitated by scholars and historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An estimate of Isocrates both of his merit and his importance must be based on two separate counts, first, his prose style; second, his political ideas.

Isocrates completed the work begun by Gorgias and Thrasymachus. He had learned from them the marks of artistic prose, figures of speech, poetical words and rhythmical correspondence, but he rightly objected to their ill-considered and indiscriminate use. In his speech *Against the Sophists*, an address delivered or published on the occasion of the opening of his school, he lays down his own principles:

> It is not enough to know the methods and tricks of rhetoric; one must learn to select all one needs and to unite and arrange them, and moreover not only to choose the right moment but appropriately to ornament the work with striking thoughts and to use one's words with a rhythmical and melodious effect.
>
> (xiii. § 16.)

---

[72] *De Orat.*, ii. 94.

[73] Some were delivered for him by others.

Selection and arrangement, right time, appropriateness, these are the marks that distinguish the principles of Isocrates from those of Gorgias. To teach these principles was far more difficult than to teach mere rhetorical artifice, and no one among Greek prose writers ever so fully mastered them than Isocrates himself. An examination of his style reveals (1) Figures of Speech: antithesis is of course used freely but the more extravagant figures such as rhyme and assonance are much rarer especially in his mature work. (2) Poetical Words: here Isocrates makes a definite departure from the Gorgian school. He held that poetical words and conceits, Æschylean metaphors and the like were not *appropriate* in prose. He therefore denied himself the use of this means of attracting attention and stimulating interest and relied on striking and original thoughts (ἐνθυμήματα). This was more difficult but it was more appropriate and τὸ πρέπον was the thing that mattered. (3) Rhythm. Though prose should avoid the metres of poetry it should have a rhythm of its own. It should resemble poetry only to this extent that it should run smoothly and avoid hiatus. But prose rhythm should not strike the ear too violently. In this respect the staccato phrasing of Gorgias was crude, and even the rhythms of Thrasymachus too obvious. Isocrates therefore spread out the rhythmical pattern so that the reader can feel the effect without immediately observing how it was obtained. Often, however, he enlarges the pattern without adding anything important to the sense. Once launched on one of his magniloquent periods he seems loth to let it stop; when he adds a clause here he must add another there and so preserve the pattern to the end. Lovers of balance and harmony will enjoy Isocrates whatever he is saying, but others will find his very perfection irritating. His self-esteem and air of superiority, his πρεσβυτικὸν καὶ διδασκαλικόν, are also irritating and we often wish he would cease lecturing at us, cease saying everything πρεπόντως and give us instead some of the plain directness of Demosthenes. Yet, whether we like him or not, his mastery of his art and his influence on oratorical prose remain unquestioned.

The political ideas of Isocrates may be summed up in the phrase Unity of Hellas in the face of the Barbarian. Much of the adverse criticism of Isocrates has been directed towards this ideal as unintelligent and unpractical. He has been unfavourably contrasted with the patriot Demosthenes who never ceased to defend Hellenic freedom against the power of Macedon, while Isocrates in his later years welcomed Philip as the one man capable of uniting Greece. The mere idea of Hellenic unity was not new; there had been successful, if somewhat haphazard and partial, co-operation in the days of the Persian wars, and the theme was a popular one at Panhellenic gatherings. But Isocrates saw that vague expressions of goodwill can afford no security when there is a powerful enemy in the offing. In the *Panegyricus* he tells us that the fighting forces of the Greek states must be organized under the leadership of Athens (naval) and Sparta (military); community of purpose must be assured. But to ask any of the intensely nationalist Greek states to surrender a single part of their sovereignty and put their forces at the disposal of an outside power was asking the impossible. Their men might serve as mercenaries all over the world under any one they chose, but the Greek city-state would not be denied one atom of its autonomy. The result was that the man who saw that Hellenic civilization was something greater than national, that is city, independence was little heeded by those in power; and when, in spite of his warnings, the Greek states went on fighting, Sparta destroying any attempts at co-operation or federalism, Thebes destroying the power of Sparta while the second Athenian naval league rose and fell, then the old orator turned his eyes towards Philip, the last hope for a champion of Hellenism. He was not mistaken, for Philip, however crafty and unscrupulous, was no foe of Hellas or of Athens, and his son Alexander carried out the project of Isocrates of invading Persia to save Hellenism.

The fifteen discourses of Isocrates are sometimes classified into Scholastic and Political, but the division is misleading since some of the speeches classed as scholastic are chiefly interesting politically. It will be more convenient to group them according to subject-matter. About 390 as we have seen he wrote *Against the Sophists.* The title is significant; it shows that Isocrates like Plato was anxious to dissociate himself from all other teachers. The word was acquiring a derogatory sense of a disputatious person. Isocrates however did not disown the title; he attacks those who professed to teach and could not, those who merely indulged in eristics — verbal disputations of no practical value.[74] Nearly forty years later when he was over eighty (354) Isocrates returns to the subject of his educational methods in the *Antidosis.* This is, like Plato's Seventh Epistle, a defence of his whole life and teaching, put into the form of a speech against an imaginary accuser. He defends his speeches, particularly his Panhellenic discourses, and gives extracts from his own works. He defends his education in oratory against the charge of making the worse appear the better reason, maintaining in opposition to Plato that his teaching is the real teaching of philosophy, which must be practical.

The *Panegyricus* and *Philip* are connected with the proposed invasion of Persia. The former is Isocrates' finest work. It was completed in 380 and, though only some fifty-five pages in length, is said to have taken ten years to write. Certainly both in detail and in the structure of the whole it bears the marks of scrupulous care. Seven years before it was finished the Persian king had dictated a treaty to the Greek states and had been virtually admitted as arbiter in their affairs. The work of Marathon and Salamis was being undone and Isocrates was convinced that an invasion of Persia was the only way to repair the damage. The *Panegyric* is the earliest and best account of the political aims of Isocrates which we discussed above. Thirty-four years later, despairing of Athens and Sparta, he sent an address to Philip urging him to undertake it. His friends thought the old man was crazy (*Philip,* § 18), but when they had read the speech they were all converted! (§ 23). Nor did the internal affairs of Greece escape the attention of Isocrates. It was not part of his programme that they should surrender their political independence. In the *Plataicus* (373) he appeals to Athens to save her old ally Platæa from the oppression of Thebes. In 366 he sent his *Archidamus* giving advice to the Spartan king. More important is *On the Peace* addressed to his fellow-Athenians in 355. Some members of the second Athenian confederacy wished to secede, which Athens would not allow. Isocrates upholds their cause. "I am convinced," he boldly writes, "both that we shall govern our city better and that we ourselves shall be better off and prosper in every direction, if we give up striving after a maritime empire. For this is the cause of all our troubles" (§ 28).

---

[74] Cp. above, pp. 175 and 333.

The affairs of Athens herself are discussed in the *Areopagiticus* and the *Panathenaicus*. In the former he contrasts the condition of the city as he knows it with the good old days when the Council of the Areopagus was a real influence in public life. It cannot have been of much value in contemporary politics but it is interesting to-day for the historian. The *Panathenaicus* is his last work, written when he was ninety-two to ninety-seven years old and is one of his longest and most famous works. Its subject is the greatness of Athens, but at the beginning Isocrates, always ready to air his grievances, goes back over his life and work and the misrepresentations of Sophists who had disparaged his writings and his teaching. He praises Athens by contrasting her with Sparta both in regard to their past history and their systems of government. He digresses for a moment to praise Agamemnon, because he was the only man in history who had successfully led an expeditionary force of all the Greeks. He praises the constitution of Athens, not indeed as he knew it, but the old democracy of which he had already written in the *Panegyricus*. Finally he points out that his criticisms of Sparta are intended to be friendly and helpful, for both Athens and Sparta are glorious cities. The work is a recapitulation of much that he had said elsewhere.

These works all had a bearing on contemporary politics, not so the Cyprian Discourses. Evagoras, king of Salamis in Cyprus, an ally of Athens and a champion of Hellenism, had spent much of his life in fighting the Persians. Some years after his death in 374 Isocrates published his *Evagoras*. Like the *Agesilaus* of Xenophon, for which it may have served as a model, it is not intended to be a full account of his life, but an essay in praise of his character and achievements. It is a conscious (§§ 6–7) attempt to give to a great man of his own day by means of prose (διὰ λόγων) the immortality which in earlier times had been conferred by poets. Evagoras was succeeded by his son Nicocles, a former pupil of Isocrates, and on his accession in 374 Isocrates addresses him in the work *To Nicocles*, giving him advice on the duties and responsibilities of a prince. He treats the subject quite generally and not in relation to Cyprus. Very characteristic of our author is the following: "The ideal thing is to strike the right moment in every critical situation, but when the situation is complicated, prefer to do too little than too much" (§ 33). Even in this essay Isocrates finds an opportunity to speak about himself (48–49). A companion work is the *Nicocles* or *Cyprians*, an address to the Cyprian people put into the mouth of Nicocles some time after the beginning of his reign. The treatment is again quite general; the prince defends his right to speak, monarchy as a form of government and himself as a monarch, and concludes with advice to his subjects. An essay on the duties of a young man addressed *To Demonicus* may be included here since little is known of Demonicus except that he was a Cyprian.

There remain two rhetorical exercises *Busiris* and *Helen*. Isocrates was not greatly interested in this kind of composition but, like Plato when he wrote the *Epitaphius*,[75] he knew that he could do any of the stock kinds of speech quite as well as the average rhetor. Hence these two works are incidentally criticisms of others who had written on similar themes. The *Busiris* is addressed to Polycrates who in addition to his Accusation of Socrates [76] had also written a defence of Busiris, the mythological founder of Egypt. Isocrates, while speaking in a friendly way of Polycrates, whom he does not know personally, criticizes his work as being more likely to do harm than good to Busiris and then shows how it ought to have been done. In passing he criticizes the *Accusation of Socrates* as doing more good than harm, but unfortunately does not proceed to show Polycrates how that theme should have been handled. In the *Helen* he takes the Ἑλένης ἐγκώμιον[77] of Gorgias and objects that it is more a defence than an encomium, which is quite true. He then praises Helen properly, her beauty, her first lover Theseus and her divine power.

---

[75] *i.e.* the speech of Aspasia in the *Menexenus*.

[76] See above, note 25.

Such are the fifteen discourses of Isocrates. He never returned to the forensic writings of his earlier years, of which we have six examples, but he supplemented his political pamphlets with letters to such people as Dionysius of Syracuse (No. 1), Archidamus of Sparta (9), Philip (2 and 3) and Alexander (5). There are nine in all. He also wrote a treatise on the art of rhetoric which is unfortunately lost.

Demosthenes (384–322)

The most famous of the Attic Orators, who was an orator in the modern sense as well as a master of prose, was born at Pæonia in Attica about 384.[78] His father died when he was only seven and, though he left his family well off, the trustees not only mismanaged the estate but converted the funds to their own use. Demosthenes, who in his youth was weak in health and strength, determined on reaching manhood to sue the fraudulent trustees. Not unnaturally he sought the aid of Isæus but he wrote the speeches himself.[79] The negotiations were long drawn

[77] See p. 182.

[78] In 347 (*Meidias*, § 154) he pretended to be only 32, in order to excite sympathy for his own youth and friendlessness.

[79] The five speeches that we have dealing with his attempts to recover his patrimony all show the influence of Isæus: two against his cousin Aphobus one of the trustees (27, 28), two against Onetor to whom the property had been fraudulently made over (30, 31) and another against Phanus in reply to Aphobus.

out and complicated by further frauds and evasions so that although in the end Demosthenes won his case he only obtained a fraction of the property to which he was entitled. But at least the affair had enabled him to acquire experience in the profession which he had chosen. He supplemented this experience by much careful study, which earned him the reputation of being a book-worm and a kill-joy. He studied the history of his country, especially the works of Thucydides and must have been well acquainted with the *Panegyricus* of Isocrates before he entered public life at Athens about 355. For Demosthenes had higher ambitions than to be a speech-writer. He wished to be a speaker himself and to address his fellow-citizens in the Assembly. Handicapped by poor physique and voice he was laughed at when he made his first attempt, but thanks to the instruction given him by well-known actors of the day and to assiduous practice on the seashore or with a pebble in his mouth he overcame his difficulties and became as greatly renowned for his impressive delivery as he was for his speeches themselves. His best talents were devoted to the cause of his country's greatness and towards securing her freedom against the encroaching power of Macedon. He realized, as Isocrates did, the necessity of a greater unity among the Hellenes, but unity was to be based on the supremacy of Athens and Philip was the danger to Hellenism, not Persia. In so far as Hellenism stood for the autonomy of the city-state he was right; but Hellenism stood for something else besides, something which had to die before it could live again, something that must have died for ever, had it remained confined within a city wall, but which, released from bondage, became the greatest solvent of nationalism before the Roman Empire and the Medieval Church. The attempts of Demosthenes to stir up the Greeks against Philip met with little success. The war-cry of Greek Freedom might be popular enough in theory but the peoples themselves were as incapable of co-operation for the objects of Demosthenes as for those of Isocrates. They continued to wrangle as to who should be chief among them, while the crafty

Macedonian played one off against the other until he was master of them all. At the last fruitless battle for Greek freedom at Chæronea in 338 Demosthenes fought in the ranks. Two years later the death of Philip revived the hopes of the patriots but prompt action on the part of Alexander soon put an end to their schemes. Demosthenes' life was spared a second time and, when Alexander was conquering the East, he was crowned by the people in recognition of his services to Athens. But he was not destined to enjoy his success for long. One of Alexander's officials, Harpalus, deserted his master and appeared at Athens with ships, men and money. He began to use his gold to induce the Athenians to revolt. Some considered this a golden opportunity but Demosthenes was wiser than to believe that Harpalus could withstand Alexander. A message came demanding the surrender of the traitor and it was decided to detain Harpalus and to deposit his stolen money in the Parthenon. Harpalus escaped; he spread the story that he had deposited 700 talents. It was discovered that there were only 350 in the Parthenon. Demosthenes, who was in charge of the deposit, asked for an enquiry by the court of the Areopagus. Their report was long delayed; when it came out it mentioned the name of Demosthenes as having received 20 talents. This was little enough out of the supposed 350 but the facts of the case are disputed. In any case the extreme patriots, led by Hypereides and assisted by Deinarchus, angry with Demosthenes for refusing to revolt, seized the opportunity to attack him. He was found guilty, the evidence of the report being against him, and fined 50 talents. The sum was less than the legal penalty but it was too large for Demosthenes to pay and he went into exile. In 323 Alexander died. Demosthenes, recalled from exile and reconciled to his old party, now urged resistance to Macedon; but the regent Antipater soon defeated the Greeks and called for the execution of Demosthenes and Hypereides. They attempted to escape but were caught by the agents of Antipater. Hypereides was put to death and Demosthenes took poison at the moment of his arrest (322).

To read the speeches of Demosthenes after those of Isocrates is interesting and instructive. We realize afresh how heterogeneous are the writers whom we call the Attic Orators. We see at once that we have passed from the lecture-room to real life. The speeches of Demosthenes were all actually delivered, most of them by the author himself. They were not, however, delivered in exactly the same words and form in which we now have them; they were revised for publication, but they are nevertheless real speeches unlike those contained in Thucydides or Plato. Many no doubt were never given to the public at all; it was something of a novelty to copy and circulate speeches made in the Assembly, but the reasons for publication are clear.[80] Speeches only heard once were soon forgotten, Isocrates had attracted attention to his political aims by the issue of pamphlets and there was now a wider reading public than ever before. The reputation which these speeches won for their author was immediate, lasting and well deserved. His merits as a patriot and a politician have already been discussed. To them we must add his merits as a creative artist in prose and in particular where he stands in relation to the work of Isocrates. Now many of the marks of Isocratean prose are also to be found in Demosthenes. Among the figures of speech the more affected devices are little used, less even than in Isocrates, but antithesis, as in all good Greek, abounds. But there is a marked difference in the second point. Demosthenes had little use for "striking thoughts," *ἐνθυμήματα*, which would be lost on most of the audience in law court or assembly, still less for the extravagant conceits of Gorgias, which would have been laughed at in his day. His language comes nearer to the spoken Attic of the time, free on the one hand from pedantry and on the other from the marks of the cosmopolitan *lingua franca* which goes back to Xenophon. He did not expend ceaseless care and time looking for *τὸ πρέπον* but used the well-known word for the well-known thing. He was not writing to be admired but to convince. But as we have observed (see p. 337), no small part of the conviction which a speech carried lay in its artistic composition. That is why, to come to the third point, we find that Demosthenes is as rhythmical as Isocrates. To some extent of course the use of rhythm had become unconscious. The trained orator and prose writer would *instinctively* avoid collocations of short syllables and other rhythms unpleasing to the ear, but Isocrates, as we have seen, went much farther than this. Demosthenes occupies an intermediate position. He does not strain after exact equality or add clauses as mere makeweights. For perfection of form and balance, therefore, Isocrates held the supreme position, but there are few to-day who would not rather have the less formal and less artificial rhythm of Demosthenes. For he achieved what all prose writers aim at but few attain; he says what he means and says it well. But Demosthenes was a speaker as well as a writer and one who had no equal in the power which he exercised over his hearers. There was no rhetorical device of which he was not master, the paradox, the dilemma, the fanciful or ironical picture, he uses them all in season until his argument is reinforced by a series of shrewd blows that carry more weight than cold reasoning. He does not always tell the truth, any more than any other political speaker; his object was to convince his audience that his policy was right and the distortion or suppression of facts was a necessary means to that end. In forensic speeches notably in the *Meidias* and *De Corona* he abuses his opponents freely. This was a recognized and legitimate means of securing favour and was employed by Demosthenes with greater skill and greater violence than by any other.

---

[80] It is, however, unlikely that in every case Demosthenes did the editing himself.

Sixty-one speeches have come down to us under the name of Demosthenes but not all of these are genuine.[81]

---

[81] The *Epitaphius* (60) and the *Eroticus* (61) are rhetorical exercises of unknown origin. Many of the thirty private speeches and some of the speeches in public cases are also considered spurious; opinion differs as to how many. Among the συμβουλευτικοὶ the so-called *Fourth Philippic* looks like a clever forgery, a pastiche of other Demosthenic work, but

At any rate we do not seem to have lost anything of the published works of the orator and whether our interests lie in history or in literature, in law or in social life, his work will provide a fruitful field of study. It falls into three classes: (1) Deliberative speeches (*συμβουλευτικοί*), that is, political speeches proper such as addresses in the Ecclesia; (2) forensic speeches in public cases, *e.g. De Corona;* and (3) forensic speeches in private cases. But since the interest of the state or public trials is largely political it will be more convenient to take 1 and 2 together and to review the more important of them as far as possible in chronological order.

To bring in a new law at Athens was not without risks. It laid a man open to prosecution for proposing an illegal measure (*παρανόμων*) and Demosthenes' first public case *Against Androtion* (355 B.C.) was a prosecution of this kind. He did not deliver this speech in person but next year he appeared in court and spoke *Against Leptines*, who in view of the financial stringency in the state had proposed that the exemptions from public burdens which had been granted to certain persons should be abolished. Demosthenes attacks the measure as a breach of trust, urging that the amount of money saved would be insignificant compared with the damage done to the credit of the nation. In the same year (354) there was a rumour that the Persians intended to invade Greece. In a speech before the Assembly *On the Symmories*[82] he made light of the rumour but used the opportunity to press for naval reforms and remind them that they had enemies nearer home (§ 11). In 353 (*On Megalopolis*) he urged the Athenians to support the Arcadians against Sparta who wished to break up their federation. The same determination to see Athens strong and the ambitions of other nations checked comes out too in a forensic speech in the next year *Against Aristocrates*. In 351 he spoke *On the Freedom*

---

it is not certain. See Henri Weil, *Les harangues de Demosthène* (Text and Commentary), pp. 356–366.

[82] Companies of well-to-do citizens: each in turn had to find money for building war-ships.

of the Rhodians desiring the Athenians to help to restore the exiled democrats of Rhodes. Rhodes had been no friend of the second Athenian naval confederacy, but Demosthenes' policy of supporting democracies against oligarchies was in the best Athenian tradition.

With such a record behind him it is not surprising that Demosthenes met the rise of Philip with uncompromising hostility. In this same year 351 he spoke his *First Philippic*, the first of many speeches directed against Macedon. Eight years before, when he was struggling with rivals in his own country, Philip had sought an alliance with Athens, offering to recover Amphipolis for her if she would help him to secure Pydna. The Athenians agreed, though it was a breach of faith with their ally Pydna. Philip too broke faith. He kept both Pydna and Amphipolis and proceeded to destroy Potidæa and other Athenian possessions. For six years this kind of half-hearted war had been going on and in the *First Philippic* the orator's difficulty was not to prove that Philip was an unscrupulous enemy but to persuade his countrymen to act and, like their foe himself, act vigorously (§§ 4–7). Hired mercenaries could be sent, but they always arrived too late; the citizens must themselves bear arms as in the old days and have a regular force to guard their interests in the Thrace-ward regions. Now centuries before this time the best sites on this coast had been colonized by Greeks, and Macedon had no outlet to the sea. Hence Philip's first endeavours had been directed to securing his natural seaboard by taking Pydna and Amphipolis. All this had greatly alarmed Olynthus on the peninsula of Chalcidice. Philip, not yet strong enough to attack them openly and fearing a combination of Olynthus and Athens, gave them the lands of the stolen Potidæa (356). By 349 he was strong enough to throw off the mask and advance towards Chalcidice. Olynthus now appeals to Athens and Demosthenes pronounces his *Three Olynthiac* speeches. In the first he emphasizes the danger to Athens if Chalcidice were in Philip's hands and urges that he ought to be attacked in his own territory as well as in Chalcidice. In the second he analyses the situation and points out the weakness as well as the bad record of Philip. In the third he again calls for immediate action and personal service but the main point of the speech is that legislation should be passed to allow the Theoric or Festival Fund to be used for the purposes of the war. It does not appear that this was done.[83] In any case the mercenary force sent to Olynthus was ineffectual and Philip became master of Chalcidice in 348.

Peace was made with Philip in 346, by which time he had invaded Greece, crushed Phocis and taken her place on the Amphictyonic Council, thereby claiming to be one of the Hellenes. His conduct was causing alarm but in his speech *On the Peace* Demosthenes was against breaking the new treaty at that time. By 344, however, Philip was conducting suspicious negotiations in the Peloponnese and the *Second Philippic* warns Athens of the folly of believing Philip's protestations. In the same year or the next we have *On the Embassy* (*De Falsa Legatione*), a long speech attacking Æschines for the part he had played in the negotiations prior to the peace of 346. The power of Macedon had by 341 spread eastward towards the Dardanelles and Byzantium. This brought danger very close to the Athenians who depended largely for their grain supply on communications with the Black Sea. So when an Athenian mercenary leader in the neighbourhood committed a breach of the peace, the view of Demosthenes was that war was inevitable and desirable. He advocates his policy in the speech *On the Chersonese* and in the *Third Philippic*. The former is devoted chiefly to the desperate needs of the situation, to save the Chersonese and Byzantium. The scope of the *Third Philippic* is wider and more general. Rarely can the Athenian people have listened to so magnificent an appeal. For it is more than an appeal to them to save their own food supply. He speaks now for Greece as a whole, for the genuine Hellene against this barbarian upstart who had wormed his way into a seat on their ancient Amphictyonic Council. The *Third Philippic* is not only one of the finest of the world's political speeches but the noblest expression of all that Demosthenes stood for in the conflicting counsels of the day. Three years later came the battle of Chæronea and the end of all his hopes, but during those years his name was held in high honour at Athens and abroad and the city herself enjoyed a brief period of success.

---

[83] Not until 345.

We have passed over the speech *Against Meidias* (347 B.C.) because its chief interest is not political. We now revert to it not for any intrinsic importance but because it is typical of our author's forensic style in contrast to the moderation and earnestness of his speeches in the Assembly. Meidias was a personal foe of Demosthenes and a member of the Peace Party of Eubulus. He had interfered with and struck Demosthenes at a State festival when the orator was *choregus* in the performance of a dithyramb. Such an act, Demosthenes maintains, was *lèse-majesté* against the State and the gods and was punishable with death. There was little to be said about the facts of the case, and Demosthenes is chiefly concerned to vilify the character of his opponent by calling him names and by a recital of his misdeeds. These misdeeds, when we examine them closely, do not seem to amount to very much, yet Demosthenes contrives to set before us a picture of insolent cruelty which is almost convincing. After earnestly contending that he is thinking only of the majesty of the State and the law, which must exact the penalty, it comes as a surprise to learn from another source that Demosthenes was afterwards content to regard himself as the injured party and accept a money payment.

The greatest of the forensic speeches is that *On the Crown* or *In Defence of Ctesiphon*, who in 336 had proposed the crowning of Demosthenes for his services to the nation. The proposer was prosecuted for illegality by Æschines (*Against Ctesiphon*, 336 B.C.) but for some reason the trial did not take place till 330. Æschines had attempted to show that the proposal was not only illegal but unjustified. This gave Demosthenes the opportunity to turn his defence of Ctesiphon into a vindication of his whole political career and to say little about the question of legality. The speech is rendered even more interesting, though historically less trustworthy, by the fact that it was delivered eight years after Chæronea. For the policy which Demosthenes had consistently advocated had, in so far as it had been carried out, failed. On the other hand Chæronea, in spite of Philip's lenient treatment of Athens, proved that Demosthenes had been right in his diagnosis: the aim of Philip was to subjugate Greece. This is the view that the Athenians took; Ctesiphon was acquitted by a large majority and next year Demosthenes was crowned. A detailed account of this famous speech is impossible here; we would merely direct the attention of the reader to the skill with which it is constructed. Demosthenes had long outgrown the teaching of Isæus. He does not methodically demolish his opponent's case. He keeps on dinning it into the ears of the Athenians that he was right and that *they* were right, that they had shown patriotism while Æschines rejoiced at every success of Philip. But he is careful to avoid wearying them by repetitions or by too much historical allusion. The account of his policy is interlarded with replies to minor charges and still more with violent attacks on the character of Æschines, of which kind of abuse he was an acknowledged master. All these elements are blended together in such a way as to keep the interest of the audience alive and to leave them with the firm conviction that all his political opponents are traitors and knaves:

> Never was I seen going about the streets elated and exulting when the enemy was victorious, stretching out my hand and congratulating such as I thought would tell it elsewhere, but hearing with alarm any success of our own armies, moaning and bent to the earth like these impious men who rail at this country as if they could do so without stigmatizing themselves; and who, turning their eyes abroad, and seeing the prosperity of the enemy in the calamities of Greece, rejoice in them, and maintain that we should labour to make them last for ever! Let not, oh gracious God, such con-

> duct receive any sanction from thee! Rather plant even in these men a better spirit and better feelings. But if they are wholly incurable, then pursue them, yea, themselves by themselves, to utter and untimely perdition by land and sea; and to us who are spared vouchsafe to grant the speediest rescue from our impending alarms, and an unshaken security! [84]

Though they cannot rank so high in literature, the private speeches are of exceptional value not only for the study of Athenian law but for the information which they give us about private life in Athens in the fourth century. A few of the thirty may not be by Demosthenes but they are none the less valuable in this connection since they are all genuine forensic speeches of the period. We mention here some of the more interesting. Five, as we have seen,[85] were composed by Demosthenes in connection with the disputes over his father's estate. Next in time may be *Against Callicles* (No. 56), a good speech in defence of a farmer whose wall around his property had been the cause of a flood in the land of his neighbour Callicles higher up the hillside. Such cases were not uncommon in the Attic countryside where rain was often needed but was a danger when it came and filled every path and gully. The private speeches do not give us a favourable impression of Greek legal morality. There seems to be no doubt that Demosthenes after writing a successful speech of defence *For Phormio* the banker (*c.* 351, No. 36), was employed by the other side to bring an action for false witness in the very same case (Nos. 45 and 46 *Against Stephanus*). What is chiefly interesting about the case is the light it throws on banking; Phormio had succeeded to the business of the famous banker Pasion, whose son Apollodorus was the other litigant. *Against Bœotus* (No. 39) is a curious case in which two persons, half-brothers, lay claim to the same name. *Against Pantænetus* (37) is a puzzling speech involving intricacies of the law relating to the ownership and working of mines. *Against Conon* (54) is the most readable of them all. It is an action for assault (*αἰκία*) brought by a certain Ariston, who was a model of propriety and who, for that very reason no doubt, had been subjected first to unseemly practical jokes and finally to a brutal attack in the street by Conon and a band of rowdy companions who, like their counterparts in Rome in Juvenal's day and in London in Addison's, roamed the streets at night in search of a victim for their excess of animal spirits. It was a case after Demosthenes' own heart. These were all before 338. After that time we have a speech in defence[86] *Against Phormio*, not the banker (No. 34, *c.* 329), a case of loan on security of a ship at sea which had foundered, and *Against Dionysodorus* (56) which is of the same kind and throws light on the laws governing the corn-trade.

---

[84] *De Corona, fin.*, tr. Lord Brougham.

[85] See above, note 79.

In addition to the speeches we have a collection of six letters ascribed to Demosthenes and fifty-six *προοίμια δημηγορικά* or introductions to public speeches. The first begins with seven lines of *Philippic I* and the seventh is almost word for word the first two paragraphs of *On the Symmories*, but for the most part they are not from any known source. But they usually open with stock formulæ,[87] such as are also to be found in Demosthenes, and are therefore interesting as being an example of the Athenians' liking for traditional forms and of methods of instruction in "How to speak in public."

Aeschines (390–314)

Æschines was some six years older than Demosthenes. He was by profession at first a tragic actor; in politics we hear of him first in 348 when he actively supported the cause of Olynthus against Philip. Later he was one of the embassy sent to Philip to discuss peace, Demosthenes being also among the emissaries. Outlines of terms were agreed upon and the negotiations were completed at Athens in 346 (Peace of Philocrates). It remained to get Philip's signature and a second embassy was sent to secure this. In the course of this second mission Æschines seems to have changed his mind about Philip. According to Demosthenes he had been bribed, but we have no proof of this. At all events Philip's treatment of Phocis made the Peace of Philocrates unpopular and Demosthenes, though at first he defended it, being one of its authors, afterwards attempted to prove that Athens could have got much better terms but for Æschines. This was the easier since Æschines was now a friend of Philip. Together with another anti-Macedonian Timarchus he impeached Æschines for treason. By successfully bringing a counter-action *Against Timarchus* in 345 Æschines got rid of one of his enemies and silenced the opposition for the time. About 343 he was impeached again and both Demosthenes and Æschines delivered speeches *On the Embassy*, each giving his version of what had taken place three years before. Æschines was acquitted by a small majority. The only other extant speech of Æschines is *Against Ctesiphon* (336) on a charge of illegality in proposing the crowning of Demosthenes, in which he blackened the character and political career of his rival. When six years later the case was tried, Æschines failed to obtain a fifth of the votes and left Athens for ever.

---

[86] *i.e.* *πρός*, in reply to, not *κατά*, in accusation of.

[87] *e.g.* Nos. 30 and 35 like D. *On Chersonese* open with *ἔδει μὲν ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι*. No. 6, like the *Third Philippic*, has "Much has already been said, citizens." Nos. 13 and 14 have the apologetic formulæ *ἴσως ἐπιφθόνιον, ἴσως ὀχληρὸς κτλ.*

Almost every statement of fact in his speech *On the Embassy* is irreconcilable with the account given by Demosthenes, so that we have little definite knowledge on which to base an estimate of Æschines as a statesman. But his whole political career after 347, so far as we know it, was chiefly directed by opposition to Demosthenes rather than by loyalty to any cause or party. As a speaker he was impressive; he had a fine voice and a restrained and dignified manner; he objected to the histrionic gestures of Demosthenes. He was at least the equal of his enemy in creating a prejudice against opponents by vilifying their private lives. Whether Demosthenes or Æschines was most to blame for this degradation of the courts we cannot say, but Æschines in his *Against Ctesi-*

phon indulges in it as much as Demosthenes in the *De Corona*. We might be tempted to assume that the Athenians were intelligent enough to ignore it on both sides, did not its persistence forbid such an assumption and Isocrates (*Antidosis* 21–23) blame Athenian juries for swallowing such stuff and neglecting the merits of the case. Æschines' literary merit, however, is unquestionable. True he sometimes irritates us by reminding us continually that he is an "educated man" and reciting passages from the poets as if to prove it, but he is cleverer than Demosthenes and has a far greater sense of humour. But as an artist he is inferior; he is careless of rhythm and too fond of those affected figures of speech which had long gone out of fashion. So if he was really a pupil of Isocrates he did not greatly profit by his teaching. He seems to have relied little on the art of rhetoric, having great natural ability and readiness of speech.

Lycurgus

From 338 to 326 the finances of Athens were in the able hands of Lycurgus who is also remembered as the man to whom was due the rebuilding of the theatre of Dionysus. He belonged to one of the few ancient families who had kept their property and position during the fourth century. An old-fashioned conservative of the best type he devoted his life to public service, and his one extant speech betokens an author of fervent piety and stern morality. He regarded the smallest evasion of public duty as a crime. A certain Leocrates, who had fled the country on the news of Chæronea, returned six years later, hoping that all had been forgotten. He had not reckoned with this Athenian Cato. Lycurgus (*Against Leocrates*) instituted a prosecution for desertion. He hardly succeeds in making good his case, but so greatly was he respected that Leocrates was only acquitted by one vote in a jury of a thousand. Lycurgus was no professional speech-writer nor did he take up this or any case out of personal enmity. He claims to be actuated only by public spirit (§§ 4–6). He denounces the practice of so many forensic speakers who make attacks on their opponents that are neither true nor relevant (§ 11) and blames the jury for listening to them especially when they have the good example of the court of the Areopagus where such things are not done. Lycurgus is always a *laudator temporis acti*. He makes good his promise, at least so far as personal abuse is concerned, but he is by no means free from digressions, since he makes use of the occasion to read a lecture on the past glory of Athens, when traitors were treated as they should be, with long quotations from Euripides and Tyrtæus. If Lycurgus differed greatly from Æschines in character, there is a certain similarity in their attitude towards rhetoric. He is not generally careful about the rules of artistic prose, but his style is mixed; sometimes he writes sentences that are echoes of the teaching of Isocrates, whom at other times he neglects.

Hypereides and Deinarchus

Among the earliest and richest results of excavations in Egypt was the discovery in 1847 of papyrus fragments of Hypereides. With subsequent additions we now have six speeches in all, one entire, *For Euxenippus* (iv.),[88] four in good condition, and the concluding part of the *Against Philippides* (ii.). To these six we should probably add *For Lycophron ii.*[89] though the name does not appear among the speeches that Hypereides is known to have written. Hypereides had a great reputation, hardly inferior to that of Demosthenes himself, with whom, except for the Harpalus incident, he was in political alliance. But he was a man of very different stamp, clever and versatile, always ready to enjoy himself and not particular about his company. Like some other pupils of Isocrates he followed his master's style only when it suited him, *e.g.* in his *Epitaphius* (vi.) over those who fell fighting against Antipater in 322 (Lamian War), where a formal style was demanded. For the rest his style is more reminiscent of Lysias. This is well seen in the ease and grace

[88] The numbers are those of F. G. Kenyon (*Oxford Classical Texts*).

[89] The *Oxyrhynchus* fragment No. 1607 (vol. xiii., 1919) is ascribed to Hypereides.

of his narrative, especially in the speech *Against Athenogenes* (iii.), an Egyptian hairdresser and perfumer at Athens who sold an insolvent business to a young Athenian, using a woman as a decoy. The speech *Against Demosthenes* (v.) is interesting historically, though it leaves the Harpalus affair still obscure, since the guilt of Demosthenes is taken for granted. He does not, to our surprise, use the method of personal abuse, relying rather on his own neat wit. He is not above introducing irrelevant topics occasionally, but in his speech *For Lycophron i.* he re-echoes Lycurgus' protest against the lawyers of the day, who, he says,

> from the moment they begin, instead of bringing forward what right they have on their side, gather together a lot of lying abuse. . . . So that the defendants must either answer the irrelevant slander and neglect their proper defence, or else ignore the preliminary abuse and so leave the jury under the impression that what has been said is true.[90]

Hypereides, who was younger than Demosthenes, stands between the old and the new, between the Hellenic world and the Hellenistic. This is not a mere fanciful inference from the fact that his works were read in Egypt and that we owe our texts to papyri. For all his opposition to Macedon there is a cosmopolitan flavour about his writings that is more reminiscent of Alexandria than of Athens. Of his younger contemporary Deinarchus, a Corinthian resident at Athens, we have three speeches all connected with the case of Harpalus' money—*Against Demosthenes*, *Aristogeiton* and *Philocles*. He is both the last and the least of the Attic Orators. His speeches are technically well enough made; he knows the kind of thing to say to a jury and he has a ready flow of abuse for his opponents, but he is guilty of such absurd exaggeration that it is hard to believe that a jury could take it seriously. Yet it was perhaps inevitable that Deinarchus, having nothing original about him, should attempt to outdo his predecessors in the cheapest of oratorical devices.

---

[90] *For Lycophron*, columns 7–8.

There were many other orators at Athens whose names were not included in the Attic canon, for example Demades and Pytheas, who had a great reputation as speakers but do not seem to have published written speeches. The work of Demades was certainly not extant in Cicero's [91] day. Older than these was Hegesippus to whom the pseudo-Demosthenic speech *On Halonessus* is usually ascribed.

Aristotle (384–322)

Aristotle was born and died in the same years as Demosthenes. His birthplace was Stageira in Chalcidice. His father was physician to Amyntas III of Macedon and the son's interest in science dates from his early years. But his "University" education took place at Athens, whither he came at the age of seventeen to study at the Academy. Here he remained till Plato's death in 347 — a period of twenty years. Now Plato was not the only teacher in the Academy and mathematics and speculative philosophy not the only subjects. Aristotle was able to pursue his scientific study in addition to listening to Plato. He can hardly have been his master's favourite pupil since their interests differed no widely and since Plato was much in Sicily at the time, but there was no personal hostility between them. That Aristotle stayed twenty years at the Academy and was possibly a lecturer as well as a student is sufficient refutation of the gossip of antiquity which concocted stories of quarrels between pupil and master out of their philosophic differences. In 347 he joined another former student of the Academy, Hermeias, who was ruler of the city of Atarneus in Asia Minor. There he stayed three years, continuing the practical study of biology on the coasts of the mainland and Lesbos. Hermeias, whose niece Aristotle married, was murdered by Persian foes, and in 343 Aristotle migrated to Macedon, where, thanks to his father's connection with the court and to Philip's alliance with Hermeias, he obtained the post of tutor to the young Alexander. Writers of romance, ancient and medieval, spun tales about the friendship of these two and theorists have busied themselves detecting the influences of the philosopher on the career of the conqueror. But, whatever Aristotle may have said to his pupil, the aims and achievements of Alexander are as unlike the *Politics* as they well could be. On the other hand Aristotle did succeed in interesting Alexander in scientific study; a large party of scientists and explorers accompanied the invasion of the East. In 336, when Alexander became king, Aristotle, now 48 years old, returned to Athens. The headship of the Academy was vacant again,[92] but it was not offered to him. So he founded and for thirteen years directed a school of his own, the Lyceum, the home of the Peripatetic [93] philosophers. On the revival of anti-Madeconian feeling at Athens in 323 Aristotle, like Socrates, was accused of impiety. The opposition was not really religious but political. Aristotle had no choice but to leave the city of his adoption, another victim of science to the politico-religious persecution which still masquerades under the name of patriotism. He died next year at the age of sixty-two.

---

[91] Cic., *Brutus*, 36. Elsewhere (*Orator*, 90) he says that Demades was famous *præter ceteros* for his Attic wit.

Aristotle's literary reputation in antiquity rested chiefly on works that are now lost. At some period of his career, possibly during Plato's lifetime, he wrote philosophical dialogues of which we have only fragments. They were much admired for their beauty of style notably by such good judges as Cicero and Quintilian.[94] Their loss has deprived us of the opportunity of comparing Aristotle and Plato in that field of literature. All that we know is that they resembled the later rather than the earlier Platonic dialogues, were less dramatic and less conversational. Indeed, according to Cicero, it was an especial feature of the Peripatetics, and of Aristotle in particular, to train students to discuss two sides of a question not piecemeal but by a reasoned statement (θέσις) on either side, in which due regard was paid to style and rhetoric, not in the barren language of philosophers.[95] Now of the works that we possess only the longer fragments of the dialogues and the *Constitution of Athens* have any pretensions to style which could justify the title *flumen orationis aureum*, the rest exhibit the *philosophorum mos tenuiter disserendi*. This one published work of Aristotle, the Ἀθηναίων πολιτεία, is one of a series of popular handbooks. Thanks to various papyrus fragments we now possess almost the whole. There are sixty-three chapters, of which the first forty-one (we lack the very beginning) trace the growth of the Athenian Constitution; the remainder is a description of the existing polity as he knew it about 328. The second part is naturally more trustworthy than the first, in which there are puzzling discrepancies both with Herodotus and Thucydides and with his own *Politics*. But he had also access to sources denied to us and his account of Solon is particularly valuable and has some quotations from the poet. The work is on the whole superficial and suggests that history was not so well studied at the Lyceum as science. But it is well written and shows that Aristotle could write readable prose when he wished. His other works have no such literary merit and have been preserved almost by accident. They are the substance of lectures delivered at the Lyceum, probably his own notes, not originally intended for publication at all. They were bequeathed to his successor Theophrastus but remained unpublished, if not actually unknown, until the first century B.C. Books preserved in such a way laid themselves open to interpolation from the moment they began to be edited, and many spurious works have come to us under Aristotle's name, while the text is full of gaps and uncertainties.

---

[92] On the death of Plato's successor Speusippus.

[93] From *περίπατος*, a covered walk in which lectures were given. In later Greek the word was used to denote a school.

[94] Cicero, *Acad. Prior.*, ii. 119, Veniet flumen orationis aureum fundens Aristoteles. Cp. Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, x. 1, 83.

It is unnecessary to enlarge on the importance of Aristotle in the history of human endeavour. He laid the foundations of the scientific studies of the early centuries of our era; by the beginning of the sixth century his philosophy was more and more becoming incorporated in Christian doctrine, until it reached its complete adaptation at the hands of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. Meanwhile, thanks to Boethius and others, there was at least a second-hand acquaintance with Aristotle when most of Greek literature was unknown in Western Europe. Translations had been made into Syriac also, as early as the sixth century, thence into Arabic and thence in the Middle Ages into Latin. In the process Aristotle became shrouded in an air of mystery, and works of Secret Wisdom, *secreta secretorum* and *θεολογούμενα*, were fathered on the "master of those who know." It is true that since then the history of human knowledge has been largely the refutation and correction of Aristotle, but the same may be said too of Bacon and Newton and all pioneers. The real and lasting contribution of Aristotle lies in the fact that he was the first to realize that all data are valueless until they are classified and that the sciences themselves must be classified before they can be understood. We are still doing exactly the same thing, classifying and subdividing, not least in Aristotle's favourite science of biology. But if he was the first great classifier he was also the last man able to pursue the method over the whole of human knowledge, scientific, literary and religious. And that he was the last was due to this very classification itself. The old-fashioned philosophers of the sixth century B.C. and the Sophists of the fifth could speculate at will on the nature of the universe, of being, of life and of speech. Monists and pluralists alike they had a magnanimous and spacious holism which was no longer possible after Aristotle had begun to concentrate on the multiplicity of Being.

---

[95] Cicero, *Orator*, 46 and 127. Cp. *Tusc. Disp.*, ii 3, § 9.

The first division of the sciences was into theoretical and practical. Of the theoretical the most important he called First Philosophy, the study of Absolute Being. The chief work on this subject is the *Metaphysics*, which owes its name to the mere accident that it was placed after the *Physics* (*μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*), but it has given us the word "metaphysics" as well as many familiar concepts such as Matter and Form, Actual and Potential, the Four Causes, material, formal, motive and final. This last (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) is most important for the understanding of Aristotle, whose works have all a teleological bias. The thirteen books of the *Metaphysics* are but loosely connected with each other and touch on a variety of subjects. Other theoretical sciences are Mathematics and Physics. Aristotle was not a great mathematician like Plato, and his physics and astronomy start from the assumption that the earth is the centre of the universe, though the heliocentric theory was already being evolved. It was in these two sciences especially that the blind acceptance of the authority of Aristotle raised a barrier to progress. Of the other sciences biology was that in which he was most successful, notably in ten books on the *History of Animals* and four on the *Parts of Animals*. Of the practical sciences Logic was the chief since it was the instrument of all thought and study; his many works on logic are still for all practical purposes unsuperseded. But the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, the *Ethics* and *Politics* have a wider appeal.

The *Poetics* is the only surviving work of Aristotle which is really important in the history of literature; it is indeed more important than its intrinsic merit would justify, because it is so unique. There have been greater literary and dramatic critics than Aristotle, but the *Poetics* is the first attempt to analyse the nature and account for the origins[96] of Greek poetry, and then, for this is one of the practical sciences, demonstrate how it should be made. It is idle to protest that the writing of poetry cannot be reduced to rules, that "there are nine-and-twenty ways of constructing tribal lays," for in the Greek view it would be untrue to say that "every single one of them is right." Aristotle's aim is to discover the right way. He assumes, as does Plato, that all art is imitation but he does not find that discreditable. This is true of painting and music and of all kinds of poetry, but unfortunately he says little or nothing of lyric poetry, perhaps because he regarded it as a part of music. He speaks chiefly of Tragedy, where the lyrical and musical portions are separate from the rest, and of Epic. He promises to deal with Comedy but that part is lost. He has a marked preference for Tragedy over Epic (chap. xxvi.) and it is as a handbook of dramatic art that the *Poetics* has won its chief fame. Everyone knows his definition of tragedy as

---

[96] See Part IV.

> an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions [97]

and its six essential components: Plot (*μῦθος*), Character (*ἦθος*), Diction (*λέξις*), Thought (*διάνοια*), Spectacle (*ὄψις*) and Song (*μελοποιία*). The End or *τέλος* of tragedy-construction is Plot, not Character, which is subsidiary to it. Hence Aristotle's preference for the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, because it has the most perfect and elaborate plot. The famous doctrine of the three unities of Action, Time and Place, on which the Classical French dramatists laid such stress, is not in Aristotle at all. He insists only on unity of action, which does not consist in having one hero merely; neither a play nor a poem is a biography and must not attempt to say everything about a hero. But the difference between poetry and history goes deeper than this:

> The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with metre no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.[98]

---

[97] *Poet.*, vi. 2, tr. S. H. Butcher.

[98] ix. 2–3, tr. the same.

Aristotle had before him a much larger number of Greek tragedies than survive to-day, though it is doubtful if he had much that was earlier than Æschylus. And even Æschylus does not get his deserts owing to Aristotle's preference for elaborate plots. In Epic he knew the lost poems of the Cycle but rightly insists on the artistic excellence of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, especially how the irrational and impossible may be used in Epic in skilful hands. A poet should always prefer "probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities." [99] These are but samples of the many pregnant and much-discussed critical remarks in the *Poetics*. Not all that Aristotle says is equally valuable and there is much that is left only half-discussed or not at all. Doubtless the lectures as delivered contained fuller answers to the questions which one would like to ask, but in its present form the work has given rise to more questions than it can answer. The same is true of the *Rhetoric*, where we get no references to Demosthenes and almost nothing on the function of rhythm in prose. There are some interesting remarks on the diction proper to prose, as opposed to the poetic diction which was treated in the *Poetics*, but rhetoric was chiefly the art of persuasion, and Aristotle, as one would expect, attached most importance to persuasion by means of logical proof, though he does deal also with the psychological side and the relations between speaker and hearers.

The chief interest of these two works lies in their place in the history of criticism and in the fact that while Plato would reject both Poetry and Rhetoric, Aristotle took them as he found them and thought it worth while to include them in his lectures on the practical sciences. In the *Ethics* and *Politics*, however, Aristotle would go at least part of the way with Plato, and even when he differs from his master he is not a little indebted to him, especially to the *Republic* and the *Laws*. For both philosophers the science of conduct included public as well as private morality, politics as well as ethics; for both the city was the proper size of a state and both insisted on knowledge combined with training as the essential factor in producing good conduct. But while Plato attempted to bring all virtues under one rubric, Aristotle in the *Ethics* prefers to define each one as a mean between two extremes,[100] *e.g.* bravery is the mean between cowardice and rashness, and discusses them characteristically with reference to the End or Aim of human conduct. This he finds to be happiness; but happiness is not a state, but an activity (ἐνέργεια), not pleasure, but the exercise of the virtues. The eighth and ninth of the ten books of the *Ethics* form a digression on Friendship, which, as he says, if not a virtue itself, is at any rate connected with virtue and very necessary to life.[101] These two books are the most readable in the *Ethics*, both because the style is a little less disjointed and because of many acute observations on human nature. The *Politics* is a sequel to the *Ethics*. It is unfinished, ill-ordered, full of difficulties and inconsistencies, like so much of Aristotle, but it is an important work for the student of political philosophy. If in his scientific works Aristotle was the heir of Hippocrates and the Ionian philosophers, here at least he is the heir of his master Plato. Though he sharply criticizes (Bk. ii.) the theories of the *Republic* and the *Laws*, yet the whole sketch of the ideal city-state, the analysis of forms of polity, the rejection of democracy and the insistence on State education show how great was the Platonic influence in spite of many differences. He is like Plato too, distressingly so, in the poverty of allusions to contemporary history. There is no mention of the battle of Chæronea. This may mean that it was written before 336, perhaps even in Plato's lifetime. But if so it is strange that these notes were never looked at again. The real reason why Aristotle does not mention the victories of Philip is that he had no reason to. Contemporaries cannot realize the importance of events.

---

[99] *ἀδύνατα εἰκότα μᾶλλον ἢ δυνατὰ ἀπίθανα*, xxiv. 10.

Yet Chæronea had a significance in literature as well as history. The city-state was doomed and was about to give way first to an empire and then to self-styled kings warring for the vast dominions of that empire. Almost before the death of Aristotle the wrangling began. It is therefore fitting that this survey should end with the *Politics* of Aristotle, which sums up, rounds off and all unknowingly bids farewell to the Greek City-state. But let us not, like Aristotle, look backward only, but turn our eyes from Athens to Alexandria, from the great names of the Classical period to the great names of the Hellenistic Age, nor forget that Greek literature did not die but won fresh life when her cities fell.

---

[100] Cp. p. 333, above.

[101] Here Epicurus closely followed Aristotle.

Short Bibliography

Note. — With a few exceptions texts of the most important Greek authors are to be found in the *Oxford Classical Texts* and texts with translations, bibliographies, etc., in the volumes of the Loeb Library. References are therefore not given here. Annotated editions and commentaries have also been excluded except for a few useful anthologies; readers may consult such books as J. A. Nairn, *Hand-list of Books relating to the Classics*, section iii. Even with these exclusions a bibliography of classical Greek literature could be extended almost indefinitely, and the following list is no more than a selection of those books (*a*) which the author himself finds most useful, (*b*) which he believes will be most helpful to the student who wishes to pursue the study further. This will perhaps explain some notable omissions such as the work of Wilamowitz on Homer, of A. E. Taylor and J. Burnet on Plato, etc. etc. The bibliography can of course be supplemented by reference to the footnotes to the text. Shorter manuals, lectures, etc., are enclosed in parentheses ( ).

A

GENERAL

A. and M. Croiset. *Histoire de la littérature grecque.* Vols. 1–4.

W. Schmid. *Griechische Literaturgeschichte,* so far as published, *i.e.* Vols. 1 and 2 (before the time of the Sophists).

J. Geffcken. *Griechische Literaturgeschichte.* Vol. 1 (1926) (to the time of the Sophists).[1]

J. P. Mahaffy. *History of Classical Greek Literature.* 2 vols. (1880).

L. Laurand. *Manuel des études grecques.* Fasc. ii. (2nd edition, 1919).

G. Murray. *Ancient Greek Literature.*

(C. M. Bowra. *Ancient Greek Literature.*)

Powell and Barber. *New Chapters in Greek Literature.* 3 vols.

J. A. K. Thomson. *Greeks and Barbarians.*

R. W. Livingstone. *The Greek Genius and its Meaning to us.*

F. R. Earp. *The Way of the Greeks.*

E. E. Sikes. *The Greek View of Poetry.*

Ivo Bruns. *Das literarische Porträt der Griechen.*

(E. Schwarz. *Charakterköpfe aus der antiken Literatur.* i. 1–3.)

E. Norden. *Die antike Kunstprosa.* Vol. i.

J. W. Mackail. *Lectures on Greek Poetry.*

B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt. *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri.* 15 vols. (*Ox. Pap.*)

W. von Christ. *Geschichte der Griechischen Litteratur.* 5th edition. Vol. i.

B

PART I

M. P. Nilsson. *Homer and Mycenæ.*

T. W. Allen. *Homer: the Origins and Transmission.*

C. M. Bowra. *Tradition and Design in the Iliad.*

W. J. Woodhouse. *The Composition of the Odyssey.*

G. Finsler. *Homer.* i. 1 and 2. 3rd edition.

J. T. Sheppard. *The Pattern of the Iliad.*

Cambridge Ancient History. Vol. ii. chs. 17–19.

---

[1] The second volume of Geffcken and H. J. Rose, *Handbook of Greek Literature to the Age of Lucian,* had not come to hand when this book was first sent to the press.

PART II

H. Diels. *Anthologia Lyrica.* 3 vols.
H. W. Smyth. *Greek Melic Poets.*
B. Lavagnini. *Nuova Antologia dei Frammenti della Lirica Greca.*
The Oxford Book of Greek Verse.
U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf. *Sappho und Simonides.*
W. Schadewaldt. *Der Aufbau des pindarischen Epinikion.*
Cambridge Ancient History. Vol. iv. ch. 14.

PART III

J. B. Bury. *The Ancient Greek Historians.*
T. R. Glover. *Herodotus.*
W. Schadewaldt. *Die Geschichtschreibung des Thukydides.*
Cambridge Ancient History. Vol. v. ch. 14.
W. R. M. Lamb. *Clio Enthroned.*
E. Schwartz. *Das Geschichtswerk des Thukydides.*

PART IV

A. W. Pickard-Cambridge. *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy.*
M. Pohlenz. *Die griechische Tragödie.*
(J. T. Sheppard. *Greek Tragedy.*)
G. Norwood. *Greek Comedy.*
H. Weinstock. *Sophokles.*
(E. Tièche. *Thespis.*)
(G. Murray. *Euripides and His Age.*)
G. Murray. *Aristophanes.*

PART V

A. Diès. *Autour de Platon.*
G. C. Field. *Plato and his Contemporaries.*
R. C. Jebb. *The Attic Orators from Antiphon to Isæus.*
J. F. Dobson. *The Greek Orators.*
A. W. Pickard-Cambridge. *Demosthenes.*
Cambridge Ancient History. Vol. vi. chs. i and ii.
(A. E. Taylor. *Aristotle.*)

Index

A
Academy, The, 317, 323, 370, 371
Achaeus of Eretria, 270
Acharnians, The, 276–278, 279, 288, 289
Acusilaus of Argos, 154, 156–157
Adimantus (-ei-), 320, 330
AEneas Tacitus, 309–310
AEschines (Orator), 335, 361, 362–363, 365–367, 368
AEschines (the Socratic), 315, 316, 320, 328, 348
AEschylus, 64, 125 n., 127, 128, 141, 160, 209, 212, 213, 214, 215–231, 232, 248, 249, 252, 266, 282, 289, 290–291, 318, 338, 376
AEsop, 155
AEthiopis, The, 64
Agamemnon, The, 224–227
Agathon, 270, 287, 332–333
Agesilaus, The, 304–305, 353
Ajax, The, 233–235, 239
Alcaeus, 110–111, 112
Alcestis, The, 251–252, 267
Alcibiades, The (AEschines), 315, 320 (Plato), I. 320, 323, 326; II. 66, 323, 326; (Antisthenes), 320
Alcman, 122–124, 125
Alexander (the Great), 11, 131, 350, 354, 356, 371
Alexander, The (Euripides), 264
Ameipsias (Comedian), 280
Amphiaraus, The (Aristophanes), 283
Anabasis, The, 299 n., 300, 301–303, 304
Anacreon, 112, 116–119, 126; *Anacreonta*, 119
Ananius, 107
Anaxagoras, 175, 249, 281, 324
Anaximander, 171
Anaximenes, 171
Andocides, 335, 337, 341–342
Andromache, The, 258
Andromeda, The, 288
Androtion, *Against*, 359
Anthology, The Palatine, 153
Antidosis, The (Isocrates), 351, 367
Antigone, The, 236–240, 245, 291
Antimachus of Colophon, 102, 153
Antimachus of Teos, 153
Antiope, The, 270
Antiphon (the Sophist), 178–179, 312; (Orator), 205 n., 335, 337, 338–341, 343
Antisthenes, 316, 320, 328
Aphrodite, *Hymn to*, 78, 84–85
Apollo, *Hymn to*, 78, 81–83
Apology, The (Plato), 12 n., 180 n., 311, 317, 323, 324, 328, 334, 338 n.
    (Xenophon), 311
Archidamus, The (Isocrates), 352
Archilochus, 91, 92, 102, 103, 104–106, 112, 137, 145, 273
Areopagiticus, The (Isocrates), 352
Areopagus, Court of, 230, 356, 368
Argonautica, The Thessalian, 16; Argonauts, 152
Arion, 109–110, 145
Aristarchus, 60, 61
Aristippus of Cyrene, 312, 316
Aristophanes, 12 n., 102, 127 n., 153, 176, 179, 214, 221 n., 249, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276–294, 316, 332, 333
Aristophanes of Byzantium, 60, 61, 76
Aristotle, 12 n., 102, 174, 176, 179, 182, 209, 210, 211, 240, 270, 271, 272, 317, 370–378
Asius of Samos, 152

Aspasia (Pericles' mistress), 316, 334, 353 n.
Aspasia, The (AEschines), 316
Athenaeus (Miscellanist, *c.* A.D. 200), 64, 107, 119, 306

B

Babylonians, The, 276
Bacchae, The, 250, 267–269
Bacchylides, 127, 136, 140, 142–147
Batrachomyomachia, The, 65
Birds, The, 214, 272 n., 283–287
Boeotus, 319
Busiris, The (Isocrates), 353

C

Cadmus of Miletus, 155
Callias, 314, 320, 326
Callicles, 328
Callimachus, 79, 108
Callinus, 93, 94
Catalogue of Ships, The, 30–31
Catalogue of Women, The, 76
Cebes, 320, 328
Cephalus, 330, 342
Chaerophon, 320, 327
Charmides, The, 323, 325–326, 328, 331 n.
Charon of Lampsacus, 152, 157, 159
Chersonese, On the, 361
Chionides, 272
Choephori, The, 228–229, 245
Choerilus of Samos, 152
Cleon, 188, 196–198, 274, 276, 279–280, 282–283, 287
Clitophon, The, 324
Clouds, The, 275 n., 276 n., 279–282, 286, 316, 320
Comedy, origins of, 271–272; development, 272 ff.; nature of, 274–276; New, 262, 267, 293–294
Corax, 181, 336, 340
Corinna, 119, 120–121, 130 n.
Corn-dealers, Against the, (Lysias), 344
Crates, 273
Cratinus, 272–273, 276
Cratippus, 305, 306, 307
Cratylus, 316
Cratylus, The, 323, 334
Critias, 102, 270, 311
Critias, The, 323, 334
Crito, 325, 328, 333
Crito, The, 323, 325
Crown, On the (De Corona), 358, 359, 362–364, 367
Ctesiphon, Against, 362, 366
Cyclops, The, 211 n., 233, 250
Cypria, The, 64; *Cyprian Discourses*, The, 353
Cyrnus, 100
Cyropaedia, The (*Institutio Cyri*), 308–309, 334

D

∇αιταλῆς, The, 276
Danaids, The (AEschylus), 219
Deinarchus, 335, 356, 369
Demades (orator), 370
Demes, The (Eupolis), 274
Demeter, Hymn to, 78, 79–81, 103, 170
Demetrius of Phalerum, 155
Democritus, 175, 176
Demonicus, To (Isocrates), 353
Demosthenes (General), 197, 203, 204; (Orator), 335, 337, 346, 347, 349, 350, 354–365, 366, 367, 369, 370, 376
Deus ex Machina, 244, 248, 257–261
Dialogue, The Melian, 190 n., 199–200
Diodorus Siculus, 78 n., 305
Diogenes Laertius, 96, 97, 319
Dion, 317–318
Dionysalexandrus, The, 273
Dionysia, Great, 145, 212, 214, 215, 231, 283, 299; Rural, 277
Dionysius (I and II of Syracuse), 317–318, 344, 354
Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 113, 128, 131 n., 301, 305, 306, 343, 346
Dionysius of Miletus, 157, 159
Dithyramb, 109, 128, 131, 132, 145–146, 210

E

Ecclesiazusae, The, 292–293
Egyptians, The (AEschylus), 218
Electra, The (Sophocles), 245–246, (Euripides), 265–266

Eleusis, Mysteries of, 79–81, 103, 170–171, 212
Embassy, On the, (Demosthenes *De Falsa Legatione*), 361, 366 (AEschines), 366
Empedocles, 169, 170, 173–174
Eoiai, The, 76
Ephorus, 305, 306, 307, 348
Epic Cycle, 64–65, 376
Epicharmus, 271, 280 n., 282 n., 318
Epicrates, 317
Epics, Comic, 65–66
Epigoni, The, 64, 153
Epimenides, 170
Epinikian Odes, 109, 128, 129, 130, 132–142, 144, 213
Epinomis, The, 324, 334
Epistles (Plato), 317 n., 318, 322 n., 324, 351; (Isocrates), 354
Eratosthenes, Against, 343, 344
Eroticus, The, (Lysias-Plato), 343; (Pseudo-Demosthenes), 358 n.
Ethics, The, 374, 376–377
Eucleides of Megara, 316, 317, 328
Eudoxus, 317
Euenus of Paros, 102
Eumelus of Corinth, 151
Eumenides, The, 229–231
Eunomia, The, 94, 95, 97
Eupolis, 181 n., 273–274, 276, 279
Euripides, 19 n., 147, 178, 211 n., 212, 233, 248–270, 287–288, 289–291, 332, 338, 368
Eustathius, 61
Euthydemus, The, 323, 333
Euthyphro, The, 323, 325
Evagoras, The, 305, 353

F

Frogs, The, 12 n., 214, 275, 289–292

G

Genealogies, The (Hecataeus), 156
Glaucon, 320, 330
Gorgias, 181–183, 200, 320, 327, 336, 337–338, 339, 340, 342, 343, 347, 348, 349
Gorgias, The, 180 n., 321, 323, 327–328, 330, 343, 357

H

Halonessus, On, 370
Harpalus, 356, 369
Hecataeus, 155–156, 159, 160
Hecuba, The, 259–261
Hegesippus (orator), 370
Helen, The (Isocrates), 353, 354
Helen, Praise of (Gorgias), 182, 354
Helena (Euripides), 19 n., 251 n., 267, 288
Hellanicus, 157, 159, 168 n.
Hellenica, The (Xenophon), 206, 302 n., 303–305; (Theopompus) 305, 307; (Oxyrhynchia), 306–308
Heracleia, The (Panyasis), 152
Heracleidae, The (Euripides), 258
Heracles, The, 261
Heraclitus (-ei-), 171, 173
Hermeias, 370–371
Hermes, Hymn to, 78, 83–84
Hermogenes, 311, 312
Herodas, 319
Herodotus, 17n., 26, 62, 66, 81 n., 102, 104, 109, 110, 151, 154, 155, 156, 157–169, 183, 185, 191, 200, 202 n., 210 n., 212 n., 216, 232, 297, 301, 303, 309, 372, 375
Hesiod, 15 n., 66–76, 77, 92, 97, 98, 128, 129, 138, 151, 171, 173, 290 n.
Hiero, 127, 136–138, 142, 144, 315
Hipparchus, 117, 127
Hippias (Tyrant), 117, 170, 212
Hippias (Sophist), 176, 178, 186, 320, 326, 327
Hippias, The (*Maior*), 323, 326; (*Minor*), 323, 326
Hippocrates, Hippocratean, 176, 183–187, 340, 377
Hippolytus, The, 254–258, 268
Hipponax, 107–108, 112
Homer, Part 1 *passim*, 89, 92, 102, 141, 142, 151, 154, 160, 174, 177, 190, 209, 213, 330, 336
Hymns, Homeric, 77–85, 170 n.
Hypereides, 335, 348, 356, 368–366
Hyporcheme, 109, 131 n., 132

I

Iambic Verse, 89, 102–104, 272
Ibycus, 126–127
Ichneutae, The, 232–233
Iliad, The, 12–45, 62, 160, 233 the *Little*, 65
Ion of Chios, 270

Ion, The (Euripides), 261–263 (Plato), 323, 332
Ιωνικά (Panyasis), 152
Iphigeneia in Aulide, 19 n., 269–270; *in Tauris*, 265, 266–267
Isaeus, 335, 346–347, 348, 354, 363
Isocrates, 98, 305, 306, 317, 333, 335, 336, 337, 339, 346, 347–354, 357, 358, 367, 368

K

Καθαρμοί (Empedocles), 174
Knights, The, 221 n., 272 n., 273, 278–279
Κορινθιακά (Eumelus), 152

L

Laches, The, 323, 325
Lamprocles of Athens, 145
Lasos of Hermione, 130, 145
Laws, The, 94, 98, 322 n., 323, 324, 329, 334–335, 376, 377
Lenaea, 214, 283
Leocrates, Against, 94, 367
Leonidas of Tarentum, 108
Leptines, Against, 359
Leucippus, 175
Longinus, 114 n., 143 n., 305 n.
Lyceum, The, 371, 372
Lycophron, For, 368, 369
Lycurgus (Orator), 94, 214 n., 335, 348, 367–368, 369
Lyde (Antimachus), 102
Lysias, 330, 335, 341, 342–345, 346, 368
Lysis, The, 323, 325
Lysistrata, The, 275, 287, 288

M

Magnes, 272
Margites, The, 66
Maricas (Eupolis), 280
Medea, The, 252–254
Meidias, Against, 354 n., 358, 362
Melanippides, 147
Memorabilia, The, 311–313
Menander, 294
Menexenus, The, 316 n., 323, 334, 353 n.
Meno, The, 98, 321, 323, 328
Metaphysics, The, 373–374
Meton, 286
Mimnermus, 93, 94, 95–96, 99
Musaeus, 12
Myrtis, 119, 130 n.
Mysteries, On the, 341

N

Nanno, The, 96
Nature, On, (Xenophanes), 172–173; (Gorgias), 183
Naupactian Verses, The, 152
Nicias, Peace of, 188, 198, 263, 279, 283
Nicocles of Cyprus, 348, 353
Nicocles, To, 98, 353

O

Oath, The, 186
Odyssey, The, 12–18, 45–61, 62, 64, 77 n., 152, 154, 160, 233, 250
OEconomicus, The, 313–314
OEdipus Rex, The, 240–243, 247 n., 375
  Coloneus, 247–248
Old Oligarch, The, 187
Olympiacus (Lysias), 343
Olympicus (Gorgias), 182
Olynthiacs, The, 360–361
Onomacritus, 170
Orators, The Attic, 299, 335–370
Oresteia, The, 214, 217, 224–231, 232
Orestes, The (Euripides), 265–266
Orpheus, 12, 171
Orphic, Orphism, 12, 79, 85, 170–171, 174
Oxyrhynchus Papyri, The, 112, 113, 126, 132, 152 n., 233, 249 n., 273 n., 306–308, 315, 345, 368

P

Paean, 13, 108, 128, 132
Palamedes, The, 264
Panathenaicus, The, 352
Panegyricus, The, 348, 350, 351, 352, 355
Panyasis, 152
Parabasis, 272, 275, 277, 279, 281, 285, 288, 292
Parmenides, 173, 183, 320
Parmenides, The, 322 n., 323, 334
Partheneion, 109, 123, 131
Pausanias, 94 n., 117

Peace, The (Aristophanes), 153, 276 n., 283

Peace, On the (De Pace) (Andocides), 341, 342; (Isocrates), 352; Demosthenes, 361

Pericles, 181, 193–196, 252, 274, 298, 347

Periodos or *Periegesis* (Hecataeus), 156, 160

Peripatetic, 371, 372

Persae, The (AEschylus), 160, 219–220, 291; (Timotheus), 147

Περσικά, The (Charon), 157

Phaedo, 321, 328

Phaedo, The, 311 n., 323, 328–329

Phaedrus, The, 126, 323, 332, 343, 347 n.

Phemius, 13

Pherecrates, 273

Pherecydes of Athens, 157

Philammon, 13

Philebus, The, 323, 334

Philip of Macedon, 305, 347, 350, 351, 354, 355, 360–361, 363, 365–366, 371, 377

Philip, The (Isocrates), 351

Philippic, The First, 360, 365; Second and Third, 361; Fourth, 358 n.

Philippica, The (Theopompus), 305

Philocrates, Peace of, 361, 366

Philoctetes, The (Sophocles), 243–245; (AEschylus, Euripides), 243

Philoxenus, 147

Phoenissae (Euripides), 264–265; (Phrynicus), 214

Phrynicus (Tragedian), 211, 213 n., 214, 251; (Comedian), 273; (Grammarian, second century A.D.), 301

Phrynis of Mytilene, 147

Physics, The, 373

Pindar, 15 n., 77 n., 78 n., 98 n., 100 n., 109, 120, 124, 125, 127, 129–142, 143, 180, 187, 214, 217, 315, 319, 336, 337

Pirithous, The, 270

Pisander (-ei-) of Rhodes, 152

Pisistratus (-ei-), 61, 117, 129, 145, 163, 202 n., 212

Pittacus, 129

Plataicus, The (Isocrates), 352

Plato, 66, 94, 98, 113, 119, 126, 129, 153, 170, 173, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 186, 270, 271 n., 291, 293, 299, 308, 314, 315, 316–335, 336, 338, 343, 347, 351, 353, 357, 370, 371, 374, 376, 377

Plato Comicus, 273

Πλύντριαι, The (Sophocles), 233

Plutus, The, 292–294

Poetics, The, 12 n., 102, 174, 209, 210, 270, 271, 272, 374–376

Polemarchus, 330, 342, 345

Politics, The, 371, 372, 374, 376–378

Politicus, The, 323, 334

Polus (Rhetoritician), 327, 330

Polybius, 306

Polycrates (tyrant of Samos), 117, 126, 127; (author of κακηγορία Σωκράτους), 311 n., 353–354

Polymnestus of Colophon, 116

Πόροι, The (*Ways and Means*), 315

Pratinas, 147, 211, 213

Praxilla of Sicyon, 145

Proclus, 64

Prodicus, 176, 177, 178, 180, 186, 281, 327, 347

Prometheia, The, 221–224

Protagoras, 129, 176–178, 180, 186, 249, 281, 320, 321, 322, 336

Protagoras, The, 129, 177, 186, 323, 326–327, 329

Pythagoras, Pythagorean, 170, 172, 174, 280 n., 317, 329

Pytheas (Orator), 370

R

Republic, The, 126, 293, 308, 321, 323, 326, 328, 329–332, 335, 376, 377

Return, On his (*De redita suo*), 341

Rhetoric, The, 174, 374, 376

Rhinthon, 319

S

Sack of Miletus, The, 214

Sack of Troy, The, 64

Sappho, 91, 110, 111–116

Satyr-play, 211, 213 n., 232–233, 250, 264, 267

Scazon, 107

Scylax of Caryanda, 157

Semonides, 106–107, 152

Seven against Thebes, The, (*Septem*), 220–221, 291

Shield of Heracles, The, 76
Σίλλοι, 172
Simmias, 320, 328
Simonides, 64, 107 n., 127–129, 136 n., 140, 142, 145, 177, 282, 315
Skolia, 119, 129, 131
Socrates, 175, 179–180, 250, 274, 280–282, 292, 299, 310–315, 316, 317, 320, 321, 324–333 passim, 347, 371
Solon, 92, 96–98, 99, 164, 212, 372
Sophist, The, 323, 334
Sophists, 129, 155, 175–183, 200, 231, 249, 272, 274, 280–282, 287, 324, 326–327, 334, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 347, 352, 373
Sophists, Against (Alcidamas), 347; (Isocrates), 348, 351
Sophocles, 157, 212, 215, 231–248, 249, 250, 252, 290, 329, 375
Sophron, 318–319
Stesichorus, 124–126, 141, 144, 267
Stheneboia, The, 257 n.
Supplices, The (AEschylus), 209, 217–219, 215 n.; (Euripides), 258–259
Symmories, On the, 359, 365
Symposium, The (Xenophon), 314–315; (Plato), 119, 314–315, 321, 323, 332–333, 335 n.

T

Telegoneia, The, 65
Terpander, 84, 109, 122, 123
Thales, 171
Thaletas, 122
Theaetetus, 317
Theaetetus, The, 271 n., 323, 334
Thebais, The (Cycle), 64, 153; (Antimachus), 153
Theocritus, 319
Theognis, Theognidea, 92, 98–101, 187
Theogony, The, 74–75, 171
Theophrastus, 372
Theopompus, 305, 306, 307, 348
Thesmophoriazusae, The, 287–288
Thespis, 211, 213
Thirty, The, 102, 270, 297, 304, 316, 342, 344, 345
Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, 182, 321, 328, 330, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 348, 449
Thucydides, 18 n., 78, 161, 183, 187–206, 248 n., 252 n., 301, 303, 304, 305, 306, 324, 337, 338, 339, 340, 357, 372
Timaeus, The, 323, 334
Timarchus, Against, 366
Timotheus of Miletus, 147, 273, 299
Tisias (-ei-), 181, 336, 340, 343, 347; (= Stesichorus), 124 n.
Titans, Battle of the, 64
Trachiniae, The, 65, 246–247
Troades, The, 261, 264
Tyrtaeus, 92, 93–95, 122, 368

U

Universal History, The, 306

V

Vita Herodotea, The, 17 n., 65, 66

W

Wasps, The, 276, 282–283, 286
Works and Days, The, 17 n., 67–74, 290 n., 129

X

Xanthus of Sardis, 157, 159
Xenophanes, 152, 172–173, 231, 332
Xenophon, 179, 187, 206, 299–309, 310–316, 318, 321, 342, 347, 353, 357

Z

Zeno (of Elea), 173, 334
Zenodotus, 31, 61

A HISTORY OF CLASSICAL GREEK LITERATURE

In this scholarly, entertaining history, T. A. Sinclair examines the magnificent Greek literary heritage. Poetry, drama, history, philosophy—the Greeks invented them all; or, if not invented, so totally possessed and refined them that they became Grecian. The Western literary tradition has its principal source in Greece.

Beginning with a study of the Epic as myth and history, Dr. Sinclair moves quickly to a discussion of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* and then to a consideration of the other major poetic forms. The glory of Greek drama, unrivaled except for the plays of Shakespeare, is analyzed appreciatively, and the great philosophical systems of Plato and Aristotle are seen both in historical perspective and as they apply to modern life.

The Greek genius still holds the same power to delight and instruct that it did in antiquity. This comprehensive work is an indispensable guide to the discovery of the riches of Hellenic literature.

T. A. Sinclair **has been Professor of Greek at Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland, since 1934. He is also the author of *A History of Greek Political Thought* and *A History of Later Latin Literature.***

COLLIER BOOKS AMERICA'S LARGEST PUBLISHER OF PAPERBACK TITLES